LIFESTYLE / C1
Unique museum in Pasay charts RP's medical history

BUSINESS / B1
Check red tape, gov't urged; group cites 48 days to register business

ENTERTAINMENT / E4
'Philippine Idol' Top 24: Now we'll really see–FrancisM

NEWS / A2
Bayan Muna leader in Camarines Sur arrested by cops

Termination of oil rights upsets foreign investors

MALACAÑANG'S DECISION TO REVOKE A CONtract awarded to a foreign company for oil production in the Philippines has sent a shudder through the heart of the foreign investment community.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has issued Executive Order No. 556 that effectively terminates Malaysia-based Nitra Energy Ltd.'s right to

TERMINATION, A-11

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Monday, August 28, 2006 ★★ 9 sections | Vol. 21 / No. 261 P18 www.inquirer.net www.bing.com

Taller people smarter, too, US study claims

NEW YORK—WHILE researchers have long chased that tall people earn more than their shorter counterparts, it's not only social discrimination that accounts for this inequality.

TALLER, A-11

DOJ likens oil spill to Ultra stampede

No more oil slick in Visayan Sea —Coast Guard

By Carlo P. Gerona
Inquirer Visayas
and Ephraim Aguilar
Inquirer Southern Luzon

BACOLOD CITY—AN OIL SLICK CAPtured in a satellite image four days ago has either dispersed or has moved to other parts of the Visayan Sea that the Philippine Coast Guard cannot find it.

Or it may have washed ashore.

The PCG yesterday claimed that there was no oil slick in the Visayan Sea threatening the islands of Masbate, Biliran and Leyte.

Commander Harold Arden, Iloilo Coast Guard chief, said his men had checked the slick earlier reported by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) but did not find it.

The WWF said in a statement on Saturday that a radar-satellite image it received from the Canadian space agency Radarsat showed an oil slick 50 km to length and 16 sq km in area in the Visayan Sea. (See related stories in Across the Nation, Page A20.)

Through an aerial survey conducted on Saturday, Petron Corp., which contracted the tanker that sank on Aug. 11 off Guimaras with 2 million liters of bunker fuel oil, verified the presence of the slick, according to WWF.

But no aerial survey conducted by Petron yesterday showed that the slick had disappeared, WWF Philippines president Lorenzo Tan told the Inquirer.

The images of the oil slick were taken on Aug. 24 and were received by WWF-Philippines the following day, the WWF statement said.

Oil finger-printing would be necessary

NO MORE, A-8

Gonzalez: I'm sure of Petron's responsibility

By Leila B. Salaverria
in Manila
and Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

PETRON CORP. COULD BE legally responsible for the massive oil spill off Guimaras Island that has ravaged marine resources and deprived residents of their livelihood, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said yesterday.

"This might be like 'Wowowee'," Gonzalez said, referring to the matter of taking responsibility for the incident.

President Macapagal-Arroyo had ordered the Department of Justice to take part in the investigation and find out who was responsible for the spill that has affected 66 sq km of sea and 200 km of coastlines.

A joint Senate-House inquiry is scheduled to open today on the incident, but Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz Jr. has indicated he will not attend the hearing, setting the stage for another clash between the Senate and Malacañang. (See related story on Page A8).

Petron chartered the tanker MT Solar 1 to bring 2 million liters of bunker fuel from Bataan to Zamboanga but it sank in rough seas on Aug. 11, spilling out more than 200,000 liters of oil into the water.

Petron, which is involved in cleanup operations and has sought experts' assistance to help contain the slick, has said that "technically, the liability for the oil spill damage

DEFLAKERS, A8

Why GMA foes failed to topple her: Time for paradigm shift

By Amando Doronila

UNLESS ILL-WISHERS OF PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo want to continue being perennial losers, as they did in their ill-fated confrontations with her during the past two years, they have to wake up to the reality that a tectonic shift in political power has taken place.

The gravity of power has moved from imperial Manila to the provinces.

The shift is so profound, and yet very few have recognized it, despite mounting evidence heralding it since the 2004 election.

The first evidence emerged from the results of that balloting. Further evidence was provided by the outcome of a series of events—the failure of two impeachment attempts, of several coup attempts, and of repeated calls for people power.

All these actions were based on the perceived conventional wisdom that the configuration of forces in Imperial Manila decides the outcome of political struggle—either electoral or extra-electoral.

ANALYSIS

The 2004 election results and the failed showdowns of the past two years have proved this sacrosanct Manila-centric assumption wrong.

It might injure the pride of regime opponents to be told the unpalatable truth that first, I hate to say it, they not only have failed to notice this shift of the foundation of power, and second, much to their grief, Ms Arroyo has recognized this shift.

She has used it to her advantage as the basis of a strategy that enabled her to win the 2004 election and beat back two impeachment complaints, coup attempts and people power calls.

Recognition of this shift is the key to removing Ms Arroyo from power, especially in view of the crucial mid-term election in 2007.

If partisan requires that his opponents thwart their political strategies—to undertake a paradigm change, as some academics would call it—that have so far led to shattering defeats in all the confrontations with her, including legal and constitutional (impeachment), and unconstitutional (numerous coup attempts) and calls for people power.

WHY GMA, A-12

NURSING LEAK

GMA dentist won't quit as PRC chair

By Alcuin Papa

THE LEAK IN THE LAST NURSing board exams may be a more intractable problem for Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) Chair Leonor Tripon-Rosero than any toothache she has had to deal with in her nearly 40 years as a dentist.

Tripon-Rosero, in charge of the most important act of purify whites in the country—those of President Macapagal-Arroyo—is not about to give up.

As the controversy over the leakage in the exams continued to rage, Ms Arroyo's personal dentist rejected calls for her to resign as PRC chief, saying she would not allow herself to be pressured out of her job.

Rosero sat down with reporters late last week to answer allegations that she was "untouchable" because of her close links to the President.

"This is my job where I really have to do my best and I don't want to be pressured by any group," she said. "So long as I feel I am fit for this position, I will do my very best."

Rosero was appointed a board examiner for dentistry in 2002. The next year, she was appointed PRC commissioner. In January 2005, she was promoted to her current job of chair.

Rosero insisted that her qualifications alone, and not her close ties with Ms Arroyo, propelled her to her post.

"I am qualified for this position. That's why she saw me in the best position to be appointed here," she said.

Rejecting calls for her to step down, Rosero said: "I don't

GMA DENTIST, A-8

PATRIOTS' DAY
Soldiers take a morning jog at the Libingan ng mga Bayani in Fort Bonifacio as the nation marked National Heroes Day yesterday to remember those who gave their lives to preserve its freedom.

RAVALAN

Probers asked: How did test copies reach Baguio?

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE MAN ACCUSED OF MASTERminding the nursing exam leakage has turned the tables on his accusers.

George Cardeno, former president of the Philippine Nurses Association (PNA), instead wants authorities to investigate how complainants from Baguio City got their copies of the actual NCLEX test taken by about 42,000 examinees on June 11-12.

Cardeno noted that those copies were attached to the so-

answers' official complaint with the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC).

"The ones complaining are also the ones with copies of the leakage and they're also the top performers in the board exams," he told the Inquirer in an interview.

Cardeno, who resigned from the PNA as a result of the controversy, failed to show up at the Senate investigation on the leak age more than a week ago.

"If there's someone who should be pinned down, it should

PROBERS, A-7

A1
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
MONDAY, AUGUST 28, 2006

WEATHER FORECAST

THE TEXT Lone and Mostly Cloudy with showers and thunderstorms becoming frequent late this afternoon due to Southwest Lone and Weather Update. The rest of the country will have mostly cloudy with many with scattered rain showers and thunderstorms.

Second FRONTPAGE

Cha-cha won't cut GMA term–Palace

By Christine O. Avendaño and TJ Burgonio

AMID THE MOUNTING CLAMOR AGAINST Charter change, Malacañang yesterday insisted any changes in the Constitution would not affect President Macapagal-Arroyo's stay in office.

"Contrary to her detractors' claims, the President's political agenda has not varied on Charter change. She will not serve out her term till 2010, for which she has been duly elected," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said.

Bunye had been called earlier for the President to cut short her term in the event Charter change succeeded and a parliamentary government was put in place.

The Commission on Elections is about to determine the fate of the petition filed by the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (Ulap) and Sigaw ng Bayan to amend the Constitution through a people's initiative.

But the petition is set to be challenged by the multisectoral group Coalition for People's Sovereignty now to amend the Charter.

Bunye, however, said that Malacañang supported the issue to be "legally joined" and while it was for Charter change like the people, "we leave it to our various (nationally-mandated) institutions to determine how these changes would be pursued in the public interest."

"The President has repeatedly expressed that her utmost and singular concern is to fix the flaws in our dysfunctional system, but she shall always follow the rule of law," he said in his "View from the Palace" column.

"What happens next is for the Supreme Court and eventually the people to decide."

In 1997, the Supreme Court threw out a similar bid to amend the Charter for lack of an enabling law.

Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos Jr. said exclusively the body would be guided by the 1997 SC ruling disallowing an inadequate the 1988 initiative and Referendum Act to cover a people's initiative and enjoining the body from entertaining any petitions for amendment.

He, however, said the petition would be endorsed in the body's legal department for verification and then sent to the Comelec en banc for disposal.

But despite assurances by the Comelec that it would be guided by the 1997 Supreme Court ruling, Ulap's petition is still pending.

The nonpartisan multisectoral movement will file with the Comelec today its opposition to the petition filed by Ulap and the Sigaw ng Bayan.

"We will ask the Comelec to dismiss the petition. The Comelec should dismiss it because it suffers from so many legal infirmities," Ona Siaca convener Bona Sison said in an interview.

Aquila, a University of the Philippines professor, noted that the petition was signed by Ulap president and Nueva Ecija Rep. Eduardo Joson, proof that this was initiated by the government, and not by the people.

"This is supposed to be a people's initiative, not a government initiative. The signature of Ulap president and Rep. Ulap is really behind this, and behind the particular claim that this was a people's initiative," he said in a phone interview.

After months of gathering signatures in the countryside, and despite warnings by legal experts about its legal and constitutional infirmities, Ulap and Sigaw ng Bayan filed on Friday their petition which would seek to change the form of government to a parliamentary-unicameral system.

One Voice will also ask the Comelec to clarify the process by "which it's going to act on the petition," Sison said.

"Under the rules, the petition should be signed in signing stations by the Comelec, under the supervision of the election officer. It's like in voting. But since the petition wasn't done that way, how is Comelec going to authenticate the signatures?" he said.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said there was no need for the Senate to block the petition for now, saying the burden of proving the legality of the exercise lay with Ulap and Sigaw ng Bayan.

"I don't think that the Senate should be pressured to come in position. We're not at all under obligation to respond to the petition. Comelec chair Abalos, by a stroke of good conscience, has admitted that it was enjoined by the high court from entertaining such a petition," he said.

Some senators were elated by Abalos' pronouncement, but acknowledged the need to be "vigilant."

"I appreciate the fact that the Comelec is honoring the Supreme Court decision, unlike Malacañang which continues to impose Executive Order No. 464 in the form of Memorandum Circular 108," Sen. Ma. Ceatrice said in an interview, referring to the Palace guidelines on the appearance of government officials at inquiries.

"We welcome the statement but that shouldn't lull the public into complacency. We remain vigilant and resolute to guard against those who openly flaunt their disrespect for the democratic [sic]," Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan said.

Melo Commission members sworn in, ready to take off

By Christine O. Avendaño

TRIAL TO BEGIN (UPDATED) Melo Commission can start the investigation on the rash of political killings.

Peter Secretary Ignacio Bunye said that retired Supreme Court Justice Jose Melo and the five other members of the body were sworn into office yesterday by Supreme Court Justice Antonio Eduardo Nachura.

The Melo Commission was created by President Macapagal-Arroyo last week to investigate the spate of killings of media personalities and militant activists in the country.

But before the commission could get down to work, one of its members, Bataan Bishop Camilo Gregorio, backed out. He has since been replaced by Bataan bishop Socrates Oscar Fallarme.

"The Melo Commission is about to wind up its organizational phase and will soon hit the road with a comprehensive and thorough plan to get to the bottom of these killings," Bunye said in his "View from the Palace" column.

Bunye urged concerned sectors, including the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, to support the commission in its pursuit of the killers of the media men and military activists.

"We call on all sectors concerned to do work and justice to support the commission and bring them responsive cases before it," the presidential spokesperson said.

"What we need is for all stakeholders to come together behind us instead but to put a full stop to the spate of murders and mayhem that is now affecting the image of the Philippines," he said, adding that "[only] then can lead the way by working with the Melo Commission."

Bunye said Ms. Arroyo "remains to be outraged by these acts of violence" and that her administration would go after the killers even if they are supposedly protectors of the law.

Proof of this, he said, was the arrest of two policemen tagged in the killing last month of DZRH 9 cameraman Rudyb Bunoan.

"No one, particularly one military or police, has the right to take the law into their hands and strike a political wave through the taking of a life. We democracy, including this one, can stand on the quicksand of unreasoned violence like this," Bunye said.

Aside from Melo and Fallarme, the other members of the commission are: State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuno; National Bureau of Investigation Director Nestor Mantaring; civic leader and UP professor Merlin Magallona; Soliva Tesoro's Gonzales and Rogelio Medina as general counsel.

RM AWARDEE HERE

Ramon Magsaysay Awardee for 2006 from Korea Park Won Soon (right), awardee for public service, arrived at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport yesterday. He was met by RM Award Foundation president Carmencita T. Abella (left) and George Martin, RMAF business manager. The RM Awards will be given out on Aug. 31 at the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

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Limiting military role in elections up at meet

By Lala B. Salaverria

THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS WILL meet with Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz to discuss the scope of participation of the Armed Forces of Philippines in the coming elections.

Scheduled to meet with Cruz are Commissioners Resurreccion Borra and Florentino Tuason Jr., as well as Comelec executive director Ferdinand Rubio and director Jose Tolmed Jose and director Allen Estoloj and Eduardo Mejos.

In a letter dated May 8 to the Comelec, Cruz had proposed some guidelines on the role of the AFP in elections.

For instance, soldiers should not be involved in the counting or canvassing of votes, the chartering of precincts, and the transporting of ballot boxes and other election paraphernalia and election results. Soldiers should not be designated as security escorts to candidates, Cruz said in his letter.

Should the Comelec request for a deployment of soldiers in each tasks, the defense department will only send those who are not affected Macapagal-Arroyo disapproves the requests. The Comelec, however, can dispatch members of the AFP to participate in the elections with the concurrence of the Chief Executive.

In his letter, Cruz noted that the AFP's participation in previous elections resulted in situations that the military was forced to participate politics, hence the decision to limit the soldiers' participation in poll activities.

"The Department has implemented reform measures to insulate the AFP from partisan politics. One such measures was to define or limit the scope of the former Comelec department of AFP units, officers and personnel only in case of serious armed threats to the electoral process, which the Philippine National Police (and other civilian law enforcement agencies) cannot address as determined by the chief of staff," Cruz said in his letter.

Another militant arrested

By Leiga A. del Puerto and Juan Escandor Jr.
Inquirer Southern Luzon

NAGA CITY—POLICE YESTERDAY ARRESTED the top leader of the Communist Party of the Philippines in Bicol for illegal firearms.

In Sept. Ramon Magalit, Comarian Sur provincial police director, identified the militant leader as Jorie Vida, Bayan Muna secretary general in the province, who was arrested in nearby Milaor town at about 1:30 p.m.

Magalit, however, could not give details on the firearms that were reportedly found in Vida.

"All we have is the warrant of arrest issued by the municipal court of Pamplona town," he said.

Vida attended his radio program "Bayanang Lalo" at the DZGE radio station in Barangay Balatas in Naga before he was arrested and had gone home when he was arrested.

Bayan Muna officials in Manila said he was brought to the provincial headquarters and was still there at press time.

Party officials said they believed the charges were fabricated to harass leaders of mass movements opposed to the Arroyo regime.

"He was a complainant in the impeachment [against President Macapagal-Arroyo]. We think this is part of the policy of the Arroyo government against militants working for her ouster—to harass them," said Bayan Muna secretary general Hahamin Luagan.

Solomon de Castro, the party's deputy chief, said Vida had already received two unsolicited text messages.

In December last year, Vida's house was ransacked.

In April this year, someone took a shot at him from a moving motorcycle while in Naga City. The assailant leader beside him was wounded. No other details of the two incidents were immediately available.

Bikers press Supreme Court for access to expressways

MOTORCYCLE RIDERS have asked the Supreme Court to reconsider and clarify its recent decision upholding the motorcycle ban on "limited-access highways."

Motorcycle groups had generally welcomed the tribunal's decision, summary in initial media reports it was unfavorable to the petitioners, according to lawyer Mildred Ueno, counsel for the motorcyclists.

The bikers, including the 150,000-member Motorcycle Philippines Federation (MCPF), have long branded the ban as discriminatory and ill-conceived.

"The motorcycle community has for many years been fighting the ban, yet to place by success, experience and lack of understanding," a spokesperson for the MCPF said.

"This forced riders out of the safer roads and onto alternatives ready that are some of the most dangerous in the country, which have been estimated to be 200 times more dangerous than the toll ways."

Ueno said the bikers' petition was partly granted when the Supreme Court voided the regulations issued by the Toll Regulatory Board (TRB) that previously banned motorcycle access on the North and South Luzon expressways.

The TRB and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) are responsible in the motorcyclists' petition and are represented by the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG).

In the en banc decision penned by Justice Antonio Carpio, the Supreme Court voided DPWH Order Nos. 74 (1992) and 215 (1998) and the TRB's Revised Rules and Regulations on Limited Access Facilities (1997).

These orders designated the NLEx, SLEx and also the Manila Cavite Coastal Toll Road as "limited access highways" after it held that only the Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) had the power to declare a roadway as a "limited access highway."

In their motion for clarification, the bike groups contended that the voiding of the orders had rendered the motorcycle ban "inexistent," since the DOTC still had to identify and designate, after the required public hearings, which road networks were to be set aside as "limited access highways."

In their motion for reconsideration, the motorcyclists additionally argued that the original motorcycle ban as contained within the standing DPWH Administrative Order No. 1 (1968) was invalid due to unreasonable classification.

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She gave birth just 9 months ago... Look at Dawn Now!

After the joys of childbirth, the battle to bring back that whole-but figure after 9 months of fat build-up and completely postnatal changes is very challenging. Actress Dawn Zulueta-Laqbanoi eagerly shares how she was able to reconstruct her body from unrecognizable to hunk-able!

Although she means that every pound she gained was worth it to her son Jacobo, Dawn acutely recalls the disappointment she felt upon seeing her inflated body right after childbirth. She says, "Coming from a pregnancy, it was very frustrating since I couldn't do much about my excess weight. Given my post-caesarean condition, I was temporarily barred from doing any exercise that, for a moment, I already contemplated on getting liposuction as a desperate measure."

After considering all the horrors of liposuction, Dawn dropped the idea of any surgical procedure. She candidly states, "I don't want to look like a stuffed doll going under the knife." Giving notice to her comment she explains, "I don't want the unnecessary risk that liposuction often produces. I know people who have regretted their decision after the ripple like curves start to form and become visible on their bodies. It's really ugly. Add to it the fact that it's not just expensive, but most importantly, it can be quite dangerous."

It was at this point that she chanced upon Marie Pearce's slimming system. "Upon finding out that all their treatments are non-invasive, I immediately gave it a try. The next thing I know, I was down really losing all the unwanted pounds and inches of fat," Dawn continues. "And then finally, after shedding all that fat, I found out about Marie Pearce's newest treatment, Ultrashape. It was the perfect finishing touch for people who have lost weight but still have some lumps and bumps that just won't seem to go away. It really re-sculpts your body and shows off your curves. I was lucky that I was one of the first to try this amazing technology. After my first treatment, I immediately said to myself 'wow, it's perfect!' Ultrashape definitely has all the benefits of lipo minus the surgery and all the risks! There's no downtime whatsoever."

According to Dawn, the treatment takes an hour and a half and is done once a month. Four to five treatments are normally recommended. Flaunting her flat stomach, she proudly says, "The effect is already visible as early as the first treatment, would you believe? I was pleasantly surprised to see my tummy flatten. It boosted my confidence that I started treatment on my thighs soon after. So you see, liposuction is unnecessary."

Asked if she experienced any discomfort during the treatment, Dawn reveals, "No, not at all. The treatment was even relaxing. It was painless. The doctor explained that Ultrashape destroys the fat cells so the targeted areas like my stomach and thighs. From there, the fat is metabolized and burned naturally by my body as energy. Before I knew it, my body's once again capable of wearing even the skimpiest of outfits like a bikini. I'm confident because I have nothing more to hide. I've got the body of a sexy 20-something woman even if I'm already 37 and have just given birth!"

Not the least bothered is to the conscious people might cook up about her latest and newest post-ad to date. Dawn coolly shrugs her shoulders and says, "We're getting out of the stereotype. Even if you're a mommy, it shouldn't stop you off the pleasure to look and feel good about yourself." She adds, "Like in my case, having a sexier and fitter body now makes me more excited to do a lot of productive things because the confidence is there. If my family and I were to go to the beach, I can go out and frolic in my two-piece swimsuit without any sigh. When I'm free from insecurities, I make my husband more proud of me because we are both able to enjoy our quality moments with enthusiasm." Dawn continues, "It doesn't matter if you're in to run shorts or dance because at moments, we owe it to ourselves to always look good. Every woman can achieve the sexy body she wants if she only set her mind to it. There's no more choice out there and Marie Pearce offers a lot. It comes to women with safe and effective solutions for whatever problem there looks has."

Prior to ending the conversation, Dawn shifts to a joking mood as she highlights, "Just beware of the consequences of Ultrashape. You'll definitely start looking more delicious to your husband and you just might find yourself pregnant again!"

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Militants hit Gonzalez over remarks on UP

By DJ Yap

MILITANTS YESTERDAY ASSAILED JUSTICE Secretary Raul Gonzalez for his remarks describing the University of the Philippines as a "breeding ground" for destabilizers that "haunt the country year after year."

"It seems that [Gonzalez] wants a revolution... He has missed the limelight and is now trying to name bash by blaming the country's premier university," said Danilo Ramos, secretary general of Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas.

According to Gonzalez, UP mainly produces militant protesters and University men and women who vote around its campus ended, referring to the University of the APO Initiative.

"He will get attention all right, and a lot of flak as well," Ramos said in a statement sent to the Inquirer.

"With his remarks against UP as a school that breeds destabilizers and radical women, Gonzalez will again draw the ire of countless people not just in the University but in the activist sector," Ramos said.

He said UP was a "very respected institution of higher education" which had produced many of the country's leaders.

"His remarks is also meant to discourage the university, its students, teachers and officials from lending assistance to the campaign to oust Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo," Ramos said.

Gonzalez had stated that UP was the site of numerous protest rallies and symposia calling for the resignation of President Arroyo.

Ramos said Gonzalez was "slandering" the university by heeding Old Thrift Cavanna and Secretary Ma. Ilet Mercado of the Arroyo bureau of evidence against Ms Arroyo in the recent failed impeachment case.

YWCA elects new officers

JOSE

THE YOUNG WOMEN'S Christian Association of the Philippines has elected Florida Z. Jose president for 2006-08. Jose is also treasurer, president of the YWCA of Manila.

She is president of Falcon Maritime Agency and vice president of the Overseas Placement Association of the Philippines.

Other officers elected were Estella Jose M. Pano, vice president for administration and management; Patricia Marjorie I. Landrove, VP for program and membership; Grace A. Agustin, VP for finance; Ma. Cristeta Francisco, secretary; Shereen O. Galindo, assistant secretary; Ella Gimenda de Ocio, treasurer; Sylvia Chua, assistant treasurer, and Cleopatra B. Ramos, PRO.

The officers and new YWCA members were inducted by Dr. Ligaya L. Tadeo, dean of the Ateneo de Manila University, during the installation of officers in the Corinthian ceremony held at the Manila Polo Club.

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VAT windfall goes to social services, infrastructure

By Dara C. Dumlao

THE GOVERNMENT SPENT P8.6 billion, or 22.5 percent of its windfall collections from the expanded value-added tax (VAT), in the first semester for social services and infrastructure projects, the Department of Budget and Management said yesterday.

Based on its initial report on the use of incremental revenues from the VAT, P8.3 billion went to social services while P1.7 billion was spent on infrastructure from January to June this year.

The DBM reported that the funds were used for important initiatives in education, health, poverty alleviation, railway conversion and rural electrification.

In a statement, Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya said, "Additional revenues from the VAT have been used to improve our education system such as P490 million for new textbooks and instructional materials, P252 million for school buildings, and P687 million in nursing programs for teachers and school administrators.

"Health and nutrition programs also received a boost with P5 billion in funding for health insurance subsidies for indigent families and P1.5 billion for school feeding programs. Nearly P6 billion was released for infrastructure projects, including P500 million for the rationalization of LRT Line 1 to Cavite and P500 million for rural electrification," Andaya said.

The VAT reform, which raised the tax rate from 10 to 12 percent and scrapped certain exemptions, yielded better-than-expected revenues of P24.2 billion for the first half of the year, exceeding the target by P7.2 billion.

Finance Secretary Margarita Teves said additional revenues from the VAT would help fund the P869 billion infrastructure investment program announced by President Macapagal-Arroyo in her State of the Nation Address.

Under the VAT Law (Republic Act No. 9337), 50 percent of the additional revenues generated by the increase in the VAT rate must be invested in social services and infrastructure.

Earlier this month, a visiting International Monetary Fund mission from Washington urged the government to shore up spending for infrastructure and social services to make the most out of recent gains from fiscal reforms.

Commending the Philippine economy's good performance notwithstanding higher oil prices, the IMF mission said: "The landmark VAT reform is producing results, with government revenues on target through the first semester, the increased revenues will be used to reduce public debt and to finance infrastructure and social services."

The IMF noted that government expenditures in the first semester were less than authorized and that there would be scope to raise productive capital and priority spending for the remainder of the year, while continuing to meet the deficit target.

"This will allow full realization of the benefits of VAT reform and devote resources towards much-needed public infrastructure," the IMF mission said.

For next year, former Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Felipe Medalla said the government could lose massive P92-billion revenues from the VAT reform and the forthcoming 2007 elections would make it hard to "decompose" spending properly.

"The worst case is if the 2007 budget will be used to make sure that... mid-course-honest cooperation will go underboard," Medalla said. "If that's the case, we're better off paying down debt and waiting for the next President to use the money properly," he said.

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Apologize, solons tell Cayetano

DURING UP THE ranks for Floor Leader Prospero Nograles, former Speaker Jose Marcos "Pepe" Aquino, vice governor-elect Jonvic Remulla and Deputy Minority Leader Alan Peter Cayetano to apologize to him after the 14-policemen-hands-of-Kho-Seng-Li scandal.

Cayetano, who is the nephew of an accused in the scandal, said Representatives Monico Puentevella and Eduardo "Bobby" Jalosjos told this "gimmicky" should end.

Responding to Nograles' call, Cayetano said he was not in the House when Nograles was hurling up the wrong one.

"They should file a motion for reconsideration with the House to reopen the impeachment proceedings," he said, refusing to apologize.

After the heated exchanges, Nograles said he would do Cayetano a favor and not ask the latter to apologize to the Puentevella, Jalosjos and Remulla.

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DENR to demolish illegal fish pens in Laguna Bay

ENVIRONMENT SECRETARY ANGELO REYES has warned illegal fish pen operators in Laguna Bay their pens would be demolished if they did not dismantle them themselves by the end of the month.

"Prepare to get your illegal fish pens demolished, by force if need be. Also, get ready to face criminal charges in court for despoiling the environment," Reyes said.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources, in coordination with the Laguna Lake Development Authority, issued the warning after the lake environment had been pollured enough screening and unsafe fish farming practices.

"The three-month grace period (the LLDA and LLDA had given them is almost over," he said.

In May, Reyes and LLDA general manager Caesario Tolero announced the government's plan to remove all illegal fish pens in the lake at the end of three months to stop it from further ecological destruction.

The grace period was intended to allow operators of the illegal fish pens to harvest their fish crops were demolished.

Illegal fish pen structures are those constructed outside the designated fish cage belts or those built without operation permits from the LLDA, Reyes said.

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Defense chief won't face Congress probe

By TJ Burgonio

IN A SIGN OF CONTINUED CONFLICT between the Senate and Malacañang, Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz Jr. is expected to skip a joint Senate-House inquiry into the Guimaras oil spill today, a move that could further anger the senators.

Cruz, chair of the National Disaster Coordinating Council, wrote Sen. Pia Cayetano on Friday informing her that he would be unable to attend today's hearing, citing Memorandum Circular No. 188.

The circular, issued by Malacañang on July 27, spells out new guidelines that limit the appearance of officials from the executive branch at congressional inquiries.

Cayetano, co-chair of the joint committee on the Clean Water Act and chair of the Senate committee on the environment, was miffed by Cruz's decision, but vowed she hope he would change his mind and attend the hearing.

"I'm extremely disappointed. I'm not going to hesitate to make it clear that this is an insult of justice. How else are we going to do our job if they don't appear?" Cayetano said in an interview.

"I'll put the burden on them, and I'm going to tell the people who is responsible."

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said the Senate had the option of citing the envoy in contempt and order their arrest.

Cruz's letter came on the heels of administration insider-cum-Senate inquiries into the status of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration fund and the kickback-tainted mining board exams.

In his letter, Cruz said he had forwarded to Ms Arroyo the executive's request for the appearance to determine whether the hearing was in aid of legislation or fell within the scope of executive privilege. He also asked for 15 days to prepare for the inquiry.

Cruz invoked in the hearing were Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes, Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri, Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr., Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla, Trade Secretary Peter Favila, Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran, Transportation and Communications Undersecretary Manuel Gaite, Philippine Coast Guard Commandant Vice Admiral Arthur Gordoncillo, Philippine Ports Authority General Manager Oscar Lopez

GMA dentist won't quit as PRC chair

By [illegible]

think so is right for [illegible] to say that ... I have a term of office. If my term of office is funded, then I will immediately leave."

"If the President wants me out, I will leave because I am a presidential appointee. If anyone says I have to resign, I have a term of office. I will not resign."

Just a short upper lip

According to Reuters, she was Mr Arroyo's dentist years before the President began ranking first over distinct traits, with a slight overbite, all the way to Manicuring.

"She Mr Arroyo] was a good set of teeth," a retold Reuters said.

Others were more pointed over Mr Arroyo had an overbite, Reuters check his head. "It's just that she has a short upper lip," Reuters said.

She found Mr Arroyo, so a patient, to be "very cooperative."

"She would just close her eyes and relax," she said.

First Gentleman

Reuters last examined Mr Arroyo in July as part of her twice a year checkup at the clinic in the Malacañang compound.

"She asked me about the snoring leakage and I told her [my head] already swam [past the matter, first there was indeed a leakage. She gave a wan face," recalled Reuters.

The fate of the more than 17,000 examinees who passed the exams licensing exams in June has remained in limbo after the Court of Appeals ordered a halt to the oath-taking of the passers while it studies 4 petitions calling for new examinations.

"She [Mr Arroyo] is my patient. She has become a great friend from the Income President," Reuters said.

"First Gentleman [Mike Arroyo] is also my patient. But I don't tell [everyone because it's a personal [unclear] relationship. We have a code of ethics that says we don't have to tell everyone who your clients are. And they are not the only clients I have."

A matter of trust

On the other hand, Reuters said the patient-dentist relationship she has with Mr Arroyo must have created for something.

"I think it's just the [use] and confidence of the President given to anybody she appoints. It means she trusts that person. And like a doctor-patient relationship, she will not agree [I trust her if she doesn't have trust in me," she said.

She was also candid about the links between her husband, Malacañang Reuters, and the First Gentleman. "They belong to the Rotary Oxford Makati Central."

Another member of the Rotary Club is Ebenio Clemente, chair of Philippine Gaming Corp., Reuters's husband is head of Region's surveillance department.

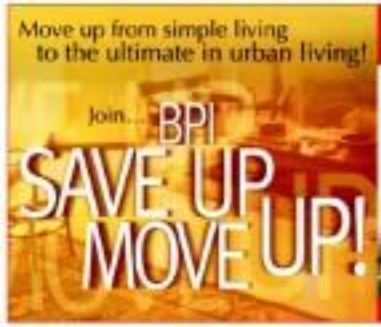
Family of dentists

"My whole [brother] are not really very close but we are friends," she said.

Reuters comes from a family of dentists. Four of her seven siblings are also dentists, as well as her son.

She earned her Doctor of Dental Medicine degree at the University of the East, graduating cum laude. She took the dentist licensure examination in 1980 and placed second.

Her clinic used to be located at the Sicon Plaza in Makati City. Today her clinic is at the Manhole Technical Center at The Fort.



Show CA who's boss on Piatco, solons tell SC

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE HOUSE MAJORITY YESTERDAY CRITICized the Court of Appeals for stopping the implementation of the Supreme Court's ruling ordering the government to pay P3 billion in compensation to the Philippine International Air Terminal Co. (Piatco) consortium which built the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3.

House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles said the high tribunal should "show the CA rules the roll here" or it called on the Supreme Court to assist its incumbent as the highest court in the land.

He warned of a looming crisis to be inflicted because "this decision of the CA is legally wrongful," and unless corrected with dispatch, the ripple rebound might "completely ruin its supreme image" in the eyes of the public.

On Dec. 21, 2005, the Supreme Court ordered the Pasay Regional Trial Court which handled the litigation case to determine just compensation for the Piatco consortium that included Fraport AG of Germany, Far Eastern JFC popped the amount at P3 billion.

But on Aug. 24 the CA eighth division issued a 60-day temporary restraining order against the ruling of the Supreme Court which declared that the government's Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) indeed indebted Piatco P3 billion before it could take over their Terminal 3.

Nograles, a lawyer, said the appellate court, a "mere judicial subaltern and not a co-equal" body, practically trashed the Supreme Court decision when the CA issued the TRO.

"The TRO is a nebulo and could be interpreted in so much to the wisdom of the Supreme Court which is the highest court of the land," Nograles, a bar topnotcher and dean of the House committee on rules, said.

While the CA decision can be considered void because it does not have the authority to reverse a Supreme Court decision, Chief Justice Artemio Panganiban should dig deeper into this CA action and immediately prevent a looming crisis in the judiciary, according to the lawmaker.

"I wonder what will happen if the CA also always reverse an SC ruling? Our justice system will now be like a football game where people can just dribble once back and forth to the CA and the SC. This is supposed to be a court of last resort in the case of the SC ruling on Piatco, the decision was already final and executory," Nograles said.

In a two-page decision, the CA ordered Pasay City Regional Trial Court Judge Jesus Mupas, the Department of Transportation and Communication, the Manila International Airport Authority and Piatco to "cease and desist from implementing awaited orders subject of this petition for writs of certiorari and prohibition with urgent prayer for the issuance of a temporary restraining order and writ of preliminary injunction."

Pinoys among nationals still being brought out of Lebanon

THERE COULD BE SO or 70 Filipino nationals leaving the foreign enclosure that the International Organization for Migration (IOM) transported from Beirut to Cyprus on over the weekend.

In a statement, the IOM said it would secure a flight to bring the Filipinos back to Manila.

"Despite working on a severely depleted budget, our operations to relocate migrants of various nationalities from Lebanon have proceeded apace. In fact, preparations are underway for the transportation of more people from Beirut to Damascus and flights are being arranged to take them to their respective countries in the coming days," said Bruce Reed, IOM's chief of mission in the Philippines.

The IOM also announced that it had out-sourced its operations in Lebanon and Syria despite the ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah that took effect on Aug. 14.

Last Saturday, 299 Filipinos arrived at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport from Lebanon on the IOM-chartered flight.

That batch brought to 1,972 the total number of Filipinos that the IOM had brought home. More than half of the Filipinos who fled Lebanon at the height of the bombings fled security, opting to return to the Philippines. Abdon Mano

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, August 28, 2006
21st Week in Ordinary Time
Augustine

1st Reading: 2 Thes 1:1-5, 11-12
Gospel: Matthew 23:13-22

Jesus said, "Woe to you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door to the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor do you allow others to do so.

"Woe to you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel far and land to win a single convert, and when he is converted, you turn him twice as fit for hell as yourselves.

"Woe to you, blind guides! You say: To swear by the Temple is not binding, but to swear by the treasure of the Temple is. How blind you are! Which is of more value: the offering on the altar, or the altar which makes the offering holy? And: Whoever swears by the altar is not binding, but whoever swears by the offering on the altar is. How blind you are! Which is of more value: the offering on the altar or the altar which makes the offering holy?

"Whoever swears by the altar is swearing by the altar and by everything on it. Whoever swears by the Temple is swearing by it and by God who dwells in the Temple. Whoever swears by heaven is swearing by the throne of God and by him who is seated on it."

Commentary:

We begin a letter from Paul, virtuous and fraternity, with the grace and peace and blessings of God called down upon us. The Author also thanks for us who believe and whose love grows ever as we endure persecution and trial. The Author goes far to affirm our worthiness of our call and glorify God with Jesus. And Jesus looks on the leaders of his time and declares that they shut the door of God's presence to the lives of the people. Jesus as a prophet calls down woe and judgment upon leaders who are guilty of hypocrisy among the people. Arrogantly and proudly for their own gain and who do not enter the kingdom and keep others out. What kind of leaders are we? What kind of leaders do we have? What should we be praying for?

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Taller people smarter, too . . .

From page A1

According to a new study, tall people are just smarter than their height-challenged peers.

The study, at age 3 – before schooling has had a chance to play a role – and throughout childhood, taller children perform significantly better on cognitive tests, "across-the-board," said Christine Peterson of Princeton University in a paper published by the National Bureau of Economic Research.

The findings were based primarily on two British studies that followed children born in 1958 and 1970, respectively, through adulthood and a III study on height and occupational choice.

Other studies have pointed to how well-to-do, better health-care accompanies greater height, and social discrimination or culprits for the lower pay earned by shorter people.

But researchers Case and Paxson believe the height advantage in the job world is more than just a question of image.

"As adults, taller individuals are more likely to select into higher paying occupations that require more advanced verbal and numerical skills and greater intelligence, for which they earn handsome returns," they wrote.

For both men and women in the United States and the United Kingdom, a height advantage of four inches is equated with a 10-percent increase in wages on average.

Prenatal care

But the researchers said the difference in performance crop up long before the tall people enter the job force.

Prenatal care and the time between birth and the age of 3 are critical periods for determining future cognitive ability and height.

"The speed of growth is more rapid during this period than at any other during the life course, and nutritional needs are greatest at this point," the researchers wrote.

The research confirms previous studies that show that early nutrition is an important predictor of intelligence and height.

"Prenatal care and prenatal nutrition are not incredibly important; even more so than we already knew," Case said in an interview.

Since the study's data only included populations in the United Kingdom and the United States, the findings could not be applied to other regions, Case said.

And how tall are the researchers?

They are both about 5 feet 8 inches tall, well above the average height of 5 feet 4 inches for American women.

A copy of the paper can be found at http://papers.nber.org/papers/w12466.pdf Reuters

Why GMA foes failed to topple her: Time for paradigm shift

From page A1

My purpose in writing this article is to provoke a paradigm change in the political salon. Efforts of regime opponents thus have been locked in sterile and unrealistic calculations that have let them down. This article is a call on the opposition for a reality check.

Paradigm change

It makes me sad and it is disappointing to read that my friend, former Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr., has said that the dismissal of the second impeachment complaint by the Senate did not slay the impeachment option, and that "impeachment has supervened quantities" that will allow it to be "resurrected into another impeachment case next year."

This statement takes refuge in wishful thinking and ignores objective evidence that the basis of the power that enabled the President to kill the two complaints is not Imperial Manila and the amalgamation of political forces in the capital.

Pimentel is a legislator, an agent in of his knowledge and conviction about the subject. There why he should be one of the first to recognize the shift and reorder his political calculus.

Never mind Bishop Deogracias Iñiguez of Calbayog, who warned of dire consequences, including a "revolution" and another people power as a backlash to the killing of the second complaint.

No Cardinal Sin

The good bishop belongs to another world. Even if we take him seriously, it is enough to point out his options are based on Manila-centered solutions, all of which have failed.

People power, the Catholic Church's preferred option, has been loved to by the failure of Edsa I and II. Besides, the hierarchy no longer has Jaime Cardinal Sin, whose political clout has not remarketed to Bishop Iñiguez and his fellow bishops.

They continue to believe that the fate of impeached Philippine presidents rests on their sabid salvaging despite their feeble appearance.

The debate in successful political action is "know your enemy." So, it is important for regime opponents to know the political strategy as well as its strengths and weaknesses, and the President who has successfully managed their attempts to unseat her.

To begin with, the strategy was based on the rural constituency, mobilized by a political coalition. Nothing aside for a while, without ignoring the charges of alleged cheating (according to the Garcillano tapes), Comelec intimidator showed that she had to Pennsylvania in Metro Manila, and perceived wisdom has been he or she who wins Imperial Manila wins elections.

Myth of Metro vote

Opposition hosts show that Mr. Arroyo swamped the widely believed popularity of Erap and wiped out his Metro Manila vote with heavy majorities in populous Cebu, the Cebuano-speaking voters in Mindanao and in Pimentel's Visayas. With that went the Metro Manila myth.

In regard to impeachment attempts, the President turned them back with the support of the rural, open Bicolla not Imperial Manilans, constituency composed of mayors, governors and local officials which translated into the decisive vote in the House of congressmen more directly responsive to local opinion than the members of the Senate.

People power movements have been an Imperial Manila phenomenon. Their planning field is Edsa. They have excluded the provincianos from their movement with their insufferable arrogance and snobbery.

The idea of the Black and White movement, the self-righteous civil society groups, joined their struggle on Edsa, ignoring the existence of the rolling masses and peasants in agrarian Philippines.

Rural constituency

Rural Philippines paid both the time and felt they had no stake in Edsa environments. So, they didn't come in hordes to enroll Edsa with massive demonstrations that the exclusive Edsa enthusiasts hoped for to force Mr. Arroyo to step down and prompt the military to withdraw support from his administration.

The coups were Imperial Manila phenomenon. They depended for success on the force rallied on Edsa. Evidence and opinion polls show coups have never won rural support.

The rural folk never identified their interests with those of the coup makers, no matter what form they came. The disjunction of coup attempts on the one hand more or Edsa has been to frustrate and doomed the moves.

The key to breaking Mr. Arroyo's hold on power is to attack her links with the rural constituency.

Where to assault in 2007 is the challenge to the ingenuity of her opponents to revise their strategy.

For a start, they have to dispel the Imperial Manila myth.

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Termination of oil rights upsets foreign investors

[illegible]

take part in the development of oil deposits in the Camago-Malampaya field off western Palawan.

"Mitra won the tender fair and square and at the stroke of a pen it was taken away. There was no warning and no explanation," said one industry source, who declined to be named.

Oil exploration publication Upstream said the move was "understood to be due to pressure from influential Filipino business interests, which do not want the potentially lucrative projects to be awarded to a foreign company."

Mitra reached a preliminary agreement with a unit of the Philippine National Oil Co., PNOC Exploration Corp., which owns the Malampaya oil rights, on June 5 and the unit was released on Aug. 11 but backdated to June 17.

"It sounds like the abrogation of an agreement," said Peter Wallace, a consultant for multinational corporations with over 30 years of experience in the Philippines.

Wallace said investors were increasingly concerned about the "sanctity of contracts in this country," and there was an unfortunate sense of our major foreign producers pulling out of a government deal since the executive order was issued.

Subcontracting exploration

EO 556 included a directive that bars PNOC and other government agencies from subcontracting coal, wind, catering, maintenance, known as farm-ins, or development, known as farm-out, to the Camago-Malampaya project or risk.

It said all arrangements entered into by PNOC "which violate this executive order shall be immediately discontinued or cancelled."

The executive order also caught PNOC and the Department of Energy by surprise as neither knew anything about it, analysts told Agence France Presse. Both declined to comment on the issue.

French unease

The unease was reflected by the French Chamber of Commerce, which wrote to Trade Secretary Peter Wells, saying it would question the exclusion of the PNOC and the DOE from such a decision.

"We, the French Chamber of Commerce, are of the opinion that it indeed that was so, this secretive model not help the establishment of confidence in the Philippine market which our latter have been trying to fight for," the chamber said.

Mitra spokesperson Chris Whitmore said: "We spend a great deal of time and upward of a million dollars preparing for this bid. Having it taken away from or without any explanation has taken us completely by surprise."

$780-M project cost

Whitmore said total project cost was estimated at $780 million with recoverable reserves forecast at between 20 million and 40 million barrels to be financed by a unit of British Petroleum and Standard Chartered Bank.

He said his company had already lined up contracts with international vendors, with production due to begin toward the end of 2007.

"What we find particularly puzzling is the objection to farm-in, farm-out processes. These are the energy sector's benchmark which all oil and gas companies use worldwide," Whitmore said.

"Foreign governments and oil companies also use them to entrust and obtain partners to join in niches an exploration (farm-in) or development (farm-out) of a gas or oil field."

Global practice

Such agreements, he said, had stood the test of time worldwide for over 30 years and big oil firms like Shell did a farm-out of 45 percent of the Malampaya gas field to Chevron, as Shell did not want to take the whole fish alone.

Whitmore said to drill one oil well in Malampaya would cost more than $50 million and Malampaya was not an easy area to drill as it sits at the bottom of 1,000 meters (3,000 feet) of water.

The size and costs were considered too small for companies like Shell.

"The big players don't look at anything under 200 million barrels," Whitmore said, adding that with oil well above $60 a barrel, the Malampaya site was economically viable and within Mitra's capabilities.

He said Mitra had not given up on the project and was waiting for an explanation, while others in the industry are waiting to see how the government justifies its decision to rescind a contract after it had been executed.

"This is a right-foot fourteen," one industry source said. "When something like this happens, you have to think twice about investing here."

AFP

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OPINION

Have an opinion? Send your letter to inquirer.opinion@inquirer.com.ph or editor@inquirer.com.ph

Scary

EDITORIAL

HERE'S A SCARY SIGN OF THE TIMES: YESTERday's pronouncement, by the chair of the Commission on Elections, that the election agency will follow the law was received and treated and welcomed, correctly, as news. In fact, the lead in yesterday's story said as much about the true state of politics in the Philippines than President Macapagal-Arroyo's own session-opening address did last month.

"The Commission on Elections will go by the existing Supreme Court ruling barring the election agency from acting on any petition for a people's initiative to amend the Constitution in the absence of an enabling law," the news story started, before quoting Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos: "The decision of the Supreme Court, till it is reversed, remains a law that everyone should abide by."

Abalos' avowal is a belaboring of the obvious that inadvertently reveals more than it could possibly have intended. After all, public officials are supposed to follow the law; lawyers—and Comelec chairs are lawyers by constitutional requirement—are bound, above everyone else, to abide by Supreme Court decisions. We ask Abalos: Was it even possible that you could have considered otherwise?

Unfortunately, the answer is yes. In recent weeks, Abalos has stuck to the straight-and-narrow reading of the high court's decision on the final infirmities of the first people's initiative law. But several months ago, when the news first surfaced that the administration, through the organizational genius of Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, was effectively sponsoring a so-called people's initiative, Abalos was less than straightforward; in fact, he was outstanding all over the legal map.

But here's an even scarier, scarier sign: Nobody takes the controversial Comelec chair's latest comment at face value. The skepticism reflects the state of disrepair into which the commission's credibility—and, by extension, that of the Arroyo administration—has fallen.

When Abalos describes the procedural straitjacket that will now envelop the "people's initiative" bid by the Sigaw ng Bayan group and the union of local government officials—"We accepted [the petition] as part of our ministerial job. We will endorse the petition to our law department for verification. And after verification, the petition will be sent to the Comelec en banc for disposition"—many in the public cannot but suspect some sleight of hand or expert scene Houdini-like escape.

After all, this is the same administration that persists in following the narrowest possible interpretation of the "win-win" decision the high court handed down this year, against the calibrated preemptive response policy Executive Order 464 and Presidential Proclamation 1017. (And Abalos may protest as much as he wants, but public perception is clear on one thing: He himself is not perceived as politically neutral, as befits an officer of a constitutional commission; instead, he is seen as counsel for the President.)

Thus, the irrational sign of the times: When Abalos declared that the Comelec accepts the high court's ruling on the lack of an enabling law for the people's initiative provision, his declaration was met, by many, as proof of political manipulation.

But this turn of events does not come as a surprise, in part because political activists like Rene Azurin have already sounded the alarm. It is hard not to agree: If the Comelec, which is still controlled by Abalos, looks set to reject the Sigaw ng Bayan and Ulap petition, this must be because the administration strategy is to precisely speed up that rejection. The strategy must be to bring the matter as expeditiously as possible to the Supreme Court.

But surely a court that struck down key provisions of the CPR policy, EO 464 and PP 1017—and gave the Arroyo administration pointed reminders on democratic governance in the process—will also strike down the present "people's initiative"? We have to admit that there still exists residual skepticism regarding this issue, but perhaps the administration strategy is not an outright win, but—and just like the five-time landmark rulings—"win-win" decision.

That would allow the administration—fully aware of the Senate's reluctance to go to war, totally cognizant of the Supreme Court's slow, collegial decision-making—to proceed as planned.

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Taiwan firm failed in two projects

A FEW WEEKS AGO, I WROTE LESS ABOUT the ongoing prequalification process for improvements of a project to supply the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) with 300 million liters (300 ML) of water per day by 2010. The MWSS started the prequalification process back in 2004 but the process has lagged down.

There are 41 proponents. The MWSS prequalification body and technical committee (PBAC) has already prequalified two Filipino firms (New Business Consortium and Alaya Multi-Consortium) and disqualified two, for it is still keeping the process open for run-the-eight firms, Alabang's Foothill Berhad and Taiwan's Formosa.

Foothill, you will remember, was the partner of YBS Pacific in the ill-fated purchase of National Power Corp.'s Mindoro power plant. Because of this fiasco, Foothill seems to have dropped out of the picture. That leaves the MWSS waiting only for Formosa.

But what is this I read in a Taiwan national newspaper: Two completed projects in Hsinchung—of Formosa have failed to qualify for Taiwan water units? Formosa has asked for another 15 months of testing. But because the vice president of Formosa would soon become Taiwan President Chen's "family-in-law," Premier Chieh was advised not to extend the testing period to avoid a political scandal. Premier Chieh said he has ordered Taiwan's contract cancelled, "no matter who they are."

With the cancellation of the contract, Gaotech has the prospect of losing 4.6 billion Taiwan dollars—money spent for the infrastructure and about 2.5 billion Taiwan dollars in prospective sale of water to Taiwan. Water Corp. (TWC).

Gaotech is guilty of misrepresentation for not revealing to the MWSS its failed water projects in Taiwan. The Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) law, Gaotech should be sanctioned and barred from bidding for any BOT project for at least two years.

The MWSS is also guilty of negligence for failing to investigate the background of Gaotech and for hastily declaring the Taiwan firm a proponent for prequalification despite its bad record.

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

The MWSS bulk water project is already delayed by two years. The submission of proposal/solution papers for the project was originally scheduled on June 15, 2004. This was postponed to Jan. 31, 2005, but was subsequently done on Oct. 28, 2005. The prequalification and evaluation conducted by the six proponents were finally opened on Nov. 24, 2005. It is now August 2006, but we have not yet seen the outcome of the prequalification stage.

The project was originally conceived to introduce competition in the bulk water supply to let Metro Manila by 2008. In other words, the project is already late, so why is the MWSS taking its own sweet time to accommodate foreign firms who already have bad records in their home countries?

And if government agencies had not rakin their own sweet time in considering offers to harness the water of the Pinatubo River in Mamabao (Bodegaray), we would be facing a crisis of water now in Metro Manila and no water shortage is many about even after 2008. The San Lorenzo Ruiz Builders and Development Group, a partner in the construction of the Casecnan Dam, has offered to provide additional water to Metro Manila at no cost to the government. The offer has been there, and 18 years have been lost to red tape, but the government has yet to give the go-signal on the offer. Is it waiting for another Ferdinand Marcos to make an offer?

Manila Dam used to be the main source of potable water for Metro Manila, but it was abandoned when the larger and ipo dams were completed. But now that water from those two sources are no longer enough, the MWSS is asking for other sources. Isn't this the invitation for proponents to supply MWSS with 300 million liters of water daily.

Pinatubo Dam can easily fill that demand. Every second, millions of liters of water flow over the dam down the Bamban and Pasig Rivers, to the sea. (Or to Manila Bay. All that is needed is one fire station to build new connecting pipes from Pinatubo Dam in La Mesa Dam which is a mere three-hour drive from the former. So I don't understand why the government is dragging its feet on the proposal. And I don't also understand why San Lorenzo Ruiz is not listed among the proponents for the MWSS bulk water project.

I have written many times in this column about this long drawn-out melodrama on Pinatubo Dam, but the government has not written a clear explanation on why it is making San Lorenzo Ruiz—and Metro Manila residents—wait so long for its decision on the Pinatubo Dam project. Macapagal-Arroyo's many promises to the rest is not red tape in her government. Are the government agencies that have a say on this project making a list out of her?

A few days ago, I received a letter from Oscar Violago, president and CEO of San Lorenzo Ruiz Builders, on how his company's Pinatubo River Project will prevent flash floods in Bamban, San Marino, Mambaza and other parts of Metro Manila.

Part of the Pinatubo River Project, Boode could be prevented "by the series of low dams which we will place along the upper reaches of the Pinatubo River. Imagine, if the floodwaters flowing into the Pasig River could be reduced by 30 percent, from the flooding in Marikina and Metro Manila will be solved at no expense to the government. The ... series of small dams would ... [empower] and delay the water flows during heavy downpours ... to the same time, it will provide [us] an extra potable water to Metro Manila. Again, I would like to reiterate that the construction of our water and 500-MW hydropower supply will be done at no cost to the government. Our consumers will pay only for the water and power that they consume at a reasonable and competitive rate."

Dead and deader

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

JOURNALIST DAVID MICHELSEN SAN JUAN, SAID a very interesting letter last Friday. He wrote: "What endorses are GMA's congressional allies rallying about? The impeachment complaint was not a cacophony when it versus only four. It was the most rigorous physical proof of a people fed up with lies, cheating, taunters and famous rights violations. It became a cadaver only after GMA's minions killed it."

I don't know if the cadaver is only due to the pain where he thunders forth against the real and plentiful cadavers that are piling up in Sierra Leja and elsewhere, courtesy of a man meant to unify a nation and keep an illegitimate President in power. The country needs a cadaver, not to rise from the dead, but to put it to rest. You keep thinking that lies can happen only to other people, you assure it will happen to you. History is full of lessons there, one being the lessons of the slaughter of the Jews in Nazi Germany, which began without protest, which left Hitler free to destroy much anything he pleased and which brought retribution upon the country.

San Juan is right about the metaphor of the cadaver. It was Jose Lacaba—whose cousin Sandy Cruz endured in the 1990s, thinking (wrong, he would be as unwavering in his pro-people convictions as his brother, a thought I now limit bitterly regret—who kept using the impeachment bid "as dead as an adobo." It was Ilad that phrase he kept repeating it again and again, and giving it florid, mystifying variations as he went along. No metaphor could have been Ilad.

The real metaphor is "Ayoko pa ang damo lang pang-ay ang kabayo!" Or roughly, "What good is hay when the horse is dead?" Lagman got his rules wrong. The impeachment bid was not a dead thing that got to a living body; it was a living thing that got to a dead body. It was hay that could have resuscitated a famished horse. Alas, the horse was already dead when it got to it.

The impeachment bid is a rare sign the nation is still alive and kicking. It is a vigorous physical proof that voters are still incensed at the thought of having a President they did not vote for and would like to do something about it. Indeed, it is, or was, the most forceful indication the people still hoped they could right wrongs, correct infinities and obtain Solomonic justice by constitutional means. The last is what the majority in Congress has refused.

No President since 1986 has had her legitimacy meticulously questioned. No President has had her right to rule repeatedly rejected by the court in survey after survey. Not only accordingly, but the one who was elected into office—the Marcos loyalists insist to this day their hero won the vice presidency in 1986. It was good enough that she became President by the direct and compelling hand of sovereign will. But Ferdinand Marcos, notwithstanding that, still flattens questioned it then and questions it now—only to refine herself by claiming her support behind someone who blatantly stole the vote. Not true, says the contested people by the tens of millions, who still consider her the President of the country. And Sixto was dead, hoped only for compromise, not legitimacy.

In fact, not even GMA herself before May 2004. Most people accepted her incumbency as the presidency only grudgingly, granting the constitutionality of it (she was the legitimate successor) and taking comfort in the thought her rule would, thankfully (and strangely), be short-lived.

No President has had her right to rule questioned increasingly, except GMA after May 2004—and Ferdinand Marcos after September 1972. For exactly the same reason: Marcos relied without a mandate after September 1972, GMA has relied without a mandate after May 2004. This is now the prism against the dictator—how she is all illegitimate rulers!—though equally misleadingly supported, was, and is, vibrant, pulsating, alive. There are now the institutions that existed to prop up the illegitimate rule were, and are, dead. Except that the check from the beginning of the struggle from square to zoo.

I caught only a few glimpses of the debates done on impeachment last week. My stomach has limits to what it can take. I never expected much to come out of it, but I did never expect it as disgusting a right to be spewed into the politics face. My first and last impression was that we had fallen right back into Marcos' martial law 1980s. Salonga was the same as Marcos' time, a solitary voice crying (forget the modifier, "legislative") outlawed to use and only one purpose: to thwart any effort to unseat a dictator.

That impression was bolstered by the majority of them saying exactly the same thing that Marcos' henchmen, many of them lawyers, used to do, which was to quote the law in the most mercenary fashion to justify the most heinous atrocity. Or to massage the law to wrestle justice. Never since martial law have I heard more lawyers want to the majority of the Law the supremacy of the Law, the purity of the Law. Never since martial law have I seen more cheap gang-ups last.

That gang may grown and pose now for the cameras, but all its members have done is renounce for posterity a reminder of their role in overseeing democracy. All they have done is to demonstrate for a public—which had still hoped to count on them—that they are right wrongs—that Lust had been kidnapped by her guardians in a townhouse an el Amorsolo-ador all they have done is to prove to the people democracy is dead, their institutions are dead, the dead have come to bury the living.

Marcos did that, long did that. They're gone now, thrown out by a people who defied the law to bring back law, who went beyond the law to bring back justice, who looked past the establishment's craft to distinguish the living from the dead.

A test for the Supreme Court

SOUNDING BOARD

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

"THE COMELEC SHOULD BE PERMANENTLY enjoined from maintaining or taking cognizance of any petition for initiative or referendum to the effect that persons acted as sufficient for what? Some have validly wanted to provide for the implementation of the powers."

This spoke the Supreme Court in 1997 through Justice Ramon C. Aquino. Which the Supreme Court, Lambino and Atty. Erico B. Aumentado filed a petition with the Commission on Elections asking it to certify the alleged signatures supportive of the shift from a presidential to a parliamentary form of government as sufficient. Such a plebiscite for the ratification of the proposed Charter changes.

What is so glaringly clear in the petition is that it totally ignores the Supreme Court decision commanding the Comelec not to entertain or take cognizance of any petition for initiative and referendum and to wait instead "until a sufficient law has been validly enacted." But the petitioners, the Supreme Court decision simply does not exist. So instead, the petition harps on the very provisions of Republic Act 6735 which the Supreme Court had declared to be insufficient and inadequate in substantive matters in a manner that it "fatal and cannot be cured by empowering the Comelec to promulgate rules."

Despite the Supreme Court declaring a clear the Palace bids that none disregard of the Davide Supreme Court decision as a laudable service to the nation. With the appointment of the President to the current Supreme Court, one of grotesque, grim dark blots on our history could be erased.

In the past couple of months, attorneys I am invited to see something about Charter change. I usually begin by saying that there are two ways of achieving it: the "strong way" and the "right way," and that in our history the "wrong way" has triumphed at least twice.

By the "wrong way" I mean Charter change that is done in defiance of the existing Constitution. The first such transgression was in 1972 (1973) when the 1971 Constitutional Convention (the 1935 Constitution. The Constitutional Convention of 1971 was overtaken by martial law in September 1972. The final days of the Convention were very much influenced by martial law. A final text was approved but was never promulgated. A rump body ratified what was in a picturesque, farcical, President Marcos declared that the new Constitution had been ratified by the people through the Citizens Assemblies.

When challenged before the Supreme Court, a majority of the justices said that their constituents had now validly ratified. But confession of error by martial law and the fact that Congress had been dispersed, the Court, with extreme misery (or some, could only say "there is no further judicial obstacle to the new Constitution being considered in force and effect."

When the Supreme Court declared that there was no further judicial obstacle to the new Constitution being considered in force and effect, it based its ruling primarily on the fact that people have changed the mind of President Marcos. And Marcos had the military behind him.

The second time that the "wrong way" occurred was in 1986. The 1973 Constitution attack had so deplorably gone into force under martial law. The People Power uprising drove President Marcos, the architect of the 1972 dictatorial and subsequent administration. President Aquino did not proceed to the following the 1972 Constitution, she openly admitted that she was defying it. She proclaimed to cause the drafting of a new Constitution which was overwhelmingly ratified by the electorate on Feb. 2, 1987.

Against revolutionary government resigns signed the Supreme Court. Those who chose to join the unorganized Court were closely in agreement with the People Power revolution and clearly would not destroy the foundation of their authority. The "wrong way" came to be accepted as the "right way."

In my view, the current cries for initiative and referendum is a "wrong way." I say this for two principal reasons. First, the Supreme Court has declared that absent a proper law, the Comelec can neither use nor stop the Comelec should not "entertain" or "take cognizance" of any petition for initiative and referendum until a valid law is enacted. No valid law has been enacted. The provisions on requirements and conditions through initiative and referendum in RA 6735 are dead and have been declared as by the Supreme Court with finality nine years ago. When a law is declared ineffective by the Supreme Court for want of sufficient standards, it means that the law is dead and a basic Supreme Court cannot remember it. To do so would be to exercise legislative power which the Court does not have.

Second, even if there were a law, what is being proposed now is not what the Constitution allows for initiative and referendum. Initiative and referendum can be used only for limited amend- simple changes in individual provisions or simple additions. The shift to a parliamentary form of government is a radical one, involving a structural legislative body from a bicameral one, it not an amendment but a revision. Such changes affect the entire constitutional structure of government. By constitutional command, revisions can only be proposed by Congress or by a Constitutional Convention.

Nevertheless, can the wrong way triumph again? Ultimately, it will depend on the current Supreme Court.

In public fora, I have been asked how I think the current Supreme Court justices, almost all of whom are appointees of Presidents Macapagal-Arroyo, would handle a petition for initiative and referendum. I have always replied that I am convinced that the current justices know how they would like to be remembered by history.

Need for partnership in education reform

BUILDING EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS IS CRUCIAL TO addressing the many issues in Philippine education. Ultimately, the quality of education in this country is everyone's concern. As such, it is important to get more people involved in education-related initiatives, not to isolate true to universities or the elite.

Arguably, such initiatives are most effective at the local level and, in this re-

COMMENTARY

Natalie Christine Wrobel Jorge

gard, communities have an important role to play in supporting democratic- for meaningful reforms. One important way communities can participate actively in improving the public education system is by monitoring local school boards and requiring transparency in their activities. It should be recalled that the board's traditional function is that of an administrators of the special education fund. This fund is used for school building maintenance and other operations but is not enough to cover the requirements of the public school system.

Because of the role that local chief executives and school districts supervisors play in the boards, some have argued that local school boards have become politicized. Others question the propriety for which the special education fund has been used. Whether true or not, it is clear that if transparent property and monitored by the community, the fund can be put to good use; not only that, the local school board itself can be made to work more effectively.

In fact, there are exemplary cases of local school boards that have begun to appreciate the importance of building stakeholders at the local level in order to address educational issues. By way of example, the Naga City school board has realized that in order to become more effective as a school board it is necessary the provincial, city and municipal governors, mayors and directors to be more open to partnership and collaboration.

Early reports of the Education for All (EFA) initiative are that the EFA program has been most effective during interventions requiring lower economic and more agency cooperation. One recommendation was to look beyond the school boards and to involve the local business community. People have to never beyond accepted norms and accept up their right to quality education and to actively participate in initiatives that work toward education reforms.

Effective partnerships also engage the private sector, where many significant efforts to address the problems of education have originated. Eight years ago at the Asian Institute of Management, a series of education roundtable discussions with CEOs was held, leading to an Education Summit with government and private sector representatives participating. Two years ago, the Synergeia Foundation organized a similar summit, which was followed by a large number of private sector foundations and corporations in order to organize private sector efforts for education. That year alone, there have been numerous meetings that have been arranged by different organizations for education.

These initiatives help, but the situation is still far from ideal. In spite of considerable contributions from private sectors, the status of these efforts does not exactly produce the results that our education system requires. Moreover, even without meaning to be so, it has been a problem that private sector initiatives suffer from being episodic, owing to the subject governance and that sometimes their efforts are redundant. Where this has not been the case, it has sometimes been observed that institutions tend to work independently and seemingly oblivious to other initiatives even in the areas of their immediate responsibility. This, however, is slowly becoming a thing of the past, as more and more groups have come to accept that if they are too careful, they might end up implementing the same projects in different ways. By working with each other as well as with the communities within which they are situated, systematic solutions may be found and addressed.

In the end it is not about who has the best programs for education- what matters is how different groups with the same goals can work together to create a partnership for education. We can begin by empowering the teachers and communities through effective school boards and ensuring there with private sector solutions that demand key performance results instead of just focusing on the magnitude of what has been given.

To cite an example, the Ram Raimi Foundation Inc. has organized to initiative around the concept of "academic awareness," which creates a system of partnerships among the community, the school and the local government. These academic awareness banks are of "hub schools"—that is, private educational institutions with a tertiary school—managing areas for the sharing of resources among faculty members, students and parents, with the involvement of local officials and community members.

This program has certain characteristics in common with the education programs that the Synergeia Foundation has with the LGUs and the framework for sustainable development of the Ateneo School of Government. Aside from initiatives, such has already implemented programs that engage the community in education developments. Looking forward, there is great room for partnership among these organizations and others. The partnering could effect much needed change within the educational system, beginning first in the community level.

There is no one-size-fits-all no one-perfect solution, however helpful, that can address the issues our education system faces. There is more to addressing the problems in Philippine education than just providing financial resources or physical infrastructure. It entails working together toward education reform.

Natalie Christine Wrobel Jorge is the director for programs and research of the Ram Raimi Foundation Inc., a non-profit foundation concerned with the conceptualization and implementation of education-related programs geared toward improving the quality of Philippine education. She may e-mail your reactions to *thinkpiece@gmail.com*.

Declaration of severance

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Nonalyn Mendaño

LIKE MANY PEOPLE ACROSS THE COUNTRY, I stayed up for as long as I could to watch how Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's Congress would sell-out—or not—ASF-1 to us, the upstart country. I quizzed with entertainment. The pro-administration congressmen played right into the way-to-deceptively-laid-out by the opposition and thus sealed their fate (ASF-1, that is).

If anyone had any doubt as to whether or not the law is manifest, that doubt has been finally buttoned.

Like the statesman-ethel I felt was rather short-lived. On early morning news, the Gossips of the Old Press Hotel again raised frightening scenes against detainees and "destabilizers" who would be released from their confinement. The supposed freedom of expression through rallies—although I don't know how anyone can demonstrate a denial of left-O.

Very ominously enough, I refuse to mention subtlety, refer to the kind of governance that the Mendaño future, as all coins, to impose on us. The age of democracy and distribution is long gone.

I now hereby revive myself from my affectionate retirement to write the Kris-Crossing Mindanao from the constitutionally mandated government of the Republic of the Philippines.

I now establish my allegiance to the Sultanate of Mindanao, the Kingdom of Tondo, the Empire of Maputobichan, Sultanate of Lumoig (Lanao) and the principalities of Rajah Sulaiman (now Metro Manila), Tupay and Dapha, once conquered this archipelago for Spain.

I now declare my independence from the Republic of the Philippines.

Dum, brothers, sullivant our brothers in the Moro Islamic Liberation Front to stop their silly negotiations with the government of Ms. Arroyo. Form a united front.

Ha! Freedom? We have always been Maharlika, noble and free, free by virtue of nobility, not "freed slaves" in the constitution (meaning they have to be liberated—not freedom).

But they have always stayed completely from the feverish and fiery national's thus we, the Bangsa Moro, were the first and the last to fight the invaders and colonizers and the blood we shed was the price we had to pay to remain free—a fact attested to by our unyielding Muslim.

One essential point: why should we beg for what is rightfully ours? We are probably the only people in the world that has an actual title to the lands we live in—the "Titulo de Propiedad" of 1894 and 1914 (I, A, added) given to "Sultan Mohammed Jamalul Kiram II and Sultan Mohammed Pulalun Kiram, and their subjects" by the Supreme Court of the Philippines.

Assembly: The so-called national government here is the autonomous government, the Mindanao who's who in politics, as well as the governing Islamic Kingdom. In 1994, with the creation of autonomy in the island which I live in, Strictly speaking, the national government is squatting on the lands of Mindanao.

That is why I criticized Nestor warned to tell everyone. But no one listened. Everybody laughed at him instead. And he called everyone of them when he built the Iranian Mosque right beside Quiapo Church. Or did not even try to see only trying to compensate for the fact that all Roman Catholic churches stand on Maharlika land, donated without our consent.

Hm, perhaps people don't mind now, because by right of succession, as descendants of a nation of men, and since we have proclaimed in the secret, impenetrable to the Organization of Islamic Conference and the Arab League, that we are the Maharlika, the Inner Bangsa for Unity in the movement of those lands and the creation of the state.

Somewhere—but to what national governance is still about, Somewhere—but to what national governance is still about, Somewhere—but to what national governance is still about,

Punishing nursing examinees not the answer to leakage

LETTERS

MY CLASSMATES AND I ARE shocked by the development of events in the June 2006 nursing board examinations. We are graduates of St. Paul College-Manila, College of Nursing Class 1986. Be either cheating for this reason, we are saddened and disappointed over the reports about the cheating that tainted the nursing board examinations.

While it is true that we do not condone cheating, we also cannot agree that those who passed the June 2006 exams should take the board exams again.

Let us put ourselves in the shoes of one them. Let's call this examinee Chris. She studied and prepared hard to pass the exam and join the nursing profession, which should help her become independent and at the same time enable her to help her family. If Chris takes the exam again, she will go through the same pressure she underwent last June. What if Chris fails this time?

How about another graduate who took the same exam and failed? He takes the exam again and this time he passes. Does this mean this graduate is a better nurse than Chris? This is what the Philippine General Hospital and St. Luke's Hospital are trying to tell us when they announced that they would make it difficult for the June 2006 successful examinees to be accepted for employment in their prestigious hospitals.

We feel that retaking the exams is not the solution. We are punishing the wrong people. And this can't be. Because again we are sending the wrong message to the innocent, successful examinees.

George Gordon said company have been blamed as culprits. Thanks, but who supplied the vast questions to them? The "sources," together with Gordon et al., should be the ones punished, not the graduates who passed the exam. Our's prepared well.

We join anxious underscored why the schools, specifically the deans of nursing colleges of the concerned examinees, do not stand up and defend their graduates who passed with flying colors. If these graduates cannot register, any support and moral boost from their schools at this dismal, bleak will likely go to find none?

—FLORENCE QUINTIN-CERBELLA, payatas, cerbellas.com

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Nothing shows GMA is serious

GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO'S announcement that her administration is serious in running after corrupt government officials is your Inquirer and its articles.

As the Philippine media are on record that she is determined to stamp out corruption. But, no! Take a look at the various investments in the Philippines (and, maybe, abroad) by Chinese businessmen, some apathetic and indifferent, as if to be corruption is an inherent right part.

Wake up, my fellow Filipinos! We are now running out of time. Where good does its teaching, evil succeeds. Think not for yourselves, but for your children and their children. Now is the time to act.

—PEPPOY CASTRENCE, Tanauan, Misamis Oriental

Let debate on shift of gov't remain in the realm of issues and ideas

I TAKE STRONG EXCEPTION TO the column titled, "Intellectual dishonesty or stupidity?" (A2, Inquirer, Cullen Montreal, PDI, 8/15/06).

I believe the column was principally directed at me since Cayetano S. Torres' paper, the basis for the author's column, referred for the most part to my paper, "Should the Philippines Turn Parliamentary: The Challenges of Democratic Consolidation and Institutional Reform," which was published in 2002, where my paper was invited, cite and (2) where my paper was published in the Philippine Political Science Journal (1997), Inquirer and Kodikon (2001) and Mabuwaying and Sinagtala (2005).

Nonetheless, I evaluate Torres' critique of the position I took in my paper, specifically, I find it indicative of the politics stated by Torres help fit in enriching and elevating the level of debate on the subject. I hope does in the debate intended to be the catalyst for a more mature political culture within the realm of issues and ideas.

—FLORENCIO "BOBOY" ABAD

Cha-cha advocacy a product of a lifetime of study and reflection

I HAVE BEEN A POSITIVE, SOMEwhat vocal, observer of politics for years, almost studying and observing, and five years upon reaching comparative government and politics. Since 1972, when I served as the secretary of the 1971 Constitutional Convention, I have been on and off participating in party governments. The elected delegates agreed to adopt this system after a year of thorough deliberations.

In my published studies and for my classes in charge, I examine and report on the basic weaknesses of our presidential and unitary structure of government as actually practiced today, and from a historical perspective. This is the primary basis of my research and advocacy. My reference to foreign studies is only secondary.

In her long, 16 column, Solita Monsod, a supposed economist and a UP colleague, cited an article of a young political economist in the University of the Philippines who erroneously suggested that, in arguing for the parliamentary government, I rely mainly on the study of Alfred Stepan and Cindy Skach. Actually I use it only as a secondary reference.

Do the basis of this erroneous perception, Monsod eagerly suggested that I am guilty of either "intellectual dishonesty or ignorance/stupidity."

This is my blazing Filipino response/question:

Why doesn't she first read my published articles on parliamentary government before commencing an attack? For my money on the deficiencies and disadvantages of our own presidential government and bicameral Congress, and the likely strengths and advantages of shifting to a unicameral parliamentary government, I refer an enlightened reader to my published articles and commentaries—scattered in a little-of-study and reflection.

Instead of (stupid) labeling me an amateur that's not so, Monsod should know it to her good husband, former Chairman Bernardo, a co-author of the 1987 Constitution and the co-writer of this writer, to refute my findings and arguments. We can also explain for the benefit of our dysfunctional presidential system and why its adjustment to our natural parliamentary government that we are championing through the people's initiative and a national plebiscite.

—JOSE V. ABUEVA, UP professor emeritus of Political Science and Public Administration, and dean, 2001 Consultant's Commission

Sustainability of GSIS fund of prime importance

ALLOW US TO COMMENT ON THE letter titled "GSIS pension mapped," (PDI, 8/23/06).

The monthly EC (Employees' Compensation) survivorship pensions of the Government Service Insurance System is prescribed under Presidential Decree 626 or the Employees' Compensation and State Insurance Fund (EIF) Law. The GSIS is at present undertaking a review of the implementing guidelines in the payment of EC survivorship pension to ensure the payment of survivorship benefits to all qualified pensioners and to ensure the viability of the EC Insurance Fund (ECIF). Rowan Unit said, the GSIS has safeguard guidelines in the payment of the monthly EC survivorship pension, that is, the processing of initial/new eligible EC survivorship pensioner payments of up to the guaranteed period of five years.

While this may seem like a bitter pill to the elderly survivors, we have to contend with the reality. The GSIS has to exercise prudence and stewardship with the fund it has been tasked to administer, at all times, taking into consideration the sustainability of the fund for the benefit of existing as well as future pensioners.

We assured that the GSIS continues periodic reviews and studies on how to improve the services it provides its pensioners and the public. Letters, "Mr. Gordon" and "Mr. Torres" are free to communicate with us, should they have suggestions or know our services.

—ATTY. M. LUCILLE, department manager V, GSIS, Financial Control, Pasay City

Malicious complaint against PLM officials

IN REFERENCE TO YOUR LETTER ITEM "Grade rape filed vs. PLM president, board of regents" (PDI, 8/26/06), allow me to cite things in the proper perspective and clear up misimpressions.

1. The university president and the board of regents of the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila (PLM) have not officially been notified of any graft case filed by Dr. Saop S. Jimenez. We cannot so know about it only from the news report.

2. The complaint of Jimenez is false and malicious, intended perhaps to undermine the integrity and reputation of the university and its officials.

3. Jimenez's claim—that she was the former dean of the College of Tourism, Hotel and Travel Industry—has no basis. For the ignorance as such was not passed upon by the board and the letter could not have been verified or authenticated. Moreover, the board and the presidents, after regular evaluation, decided that her qualifications are patently inadequate to meet the basic as the University Endorsement Center.

4. The PLM University Code (Article 47) provides the president with the authority and power to appoint and designate qualified persons to fill up vacant positions. Consequently, when the board has not elected a dean for a specific college, the president, exercising on her judgment, has the power to designate such persons who meets qualified, subject to the approval of the board. Designating or renewing an acting dean of any college is a managerial prerogative of the president.

5. Jimenez is currently facing administrative and criminal cases filed by several PLM employees. After due investigation, she has been suspended.

The letter-accused president is having a "tyrant gone insane" in preposterous, malicious and a manifestation of her utter disregard of authority, facing the head of the institution, the president. Letter-writer neglects, to say the least. This action of Jimenez is a clear violation of the Code of Ethical Standards, and the Anti-Graft and Corruption Practices Act.

—ISAAC D. S. MARCOS (SALAZ, Secretary to the board of regents and university and board secretary, Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila, Rizalda Street, Intramuros, Manila

Probers asked: How did test copies reach Baguio?

Front page A1

in the PRC official in Baguio. Only that person could be the source of the leak in Baguio," said Abelardo Fernandez, one of Cordero's two lawyers.

Cordero noted that a school in Baguio was among the top performers among schools with 100 or more examinees.

In contrast, he said his school, the Philippine College of Health and Sciences in Manila, registered a miserable 12-percent passing rate.

He said the math was much lower than the school's 37 percent and 48 percent ratings in the June and December 2005 exams, respectively.

His son flunked

"My son also took the board exams and he flunked," he said.

Cordero denied the allegation made by an examinee at the Senate inquiry that he had shelled out P7 million to get advance copies of the tests from the PRC.

He said spending such an amount would have been ridiculous considering that his review center had only 926 students, each paying P1,0,000. "How could it earn by spending P7 million when it only have a small number of students?"

Another serious allegation involved the "illegal coaching" session that Cordero had conducted for forty reviewees at Ateneo de Manila before the board exams.

Cordero admitted that there had been such a session, but claimed there was nothing irregular about it. "It's an enhancement program and all other review centers usually do that."

He said around 2,500 questions covering the five areas of the exams were presented. Some of them were similar to those that appeared in the board exams, but only because "They came from the same books," he said.

Crafting exam questions

Fernandez explained the intricate PRC procedure in crafting exam questions until these were transmitted and printed in 11 testing centers around the country. He said he used to be part of the PRC board for accountancy.

His explanation basically echoed that of the six-member Board of Nursing (BON) whose members appeared at the Senate investigation.

Fernandez and Celia Valdez lawyer for the BON in the case filed at the PRC by one Rachel Gyndi Grib and other nursing examinees from Baguio.

In their seven-page statement, the BON members said the five-part June exams followed the "Test Question Database System (TQDS), a software protected by a "source code" which has only three passwords.

"The PRC rules provide that there should be an initial 500 questions deposited in the TQDS by each board member for his/her assigned subject," the members said.

"At each subsequent examination, he/she shall deposit at least 200 additional questions in the test bank unit until it (reaches) the ideal level of 3,000 questions/problems."

One question encoder

The BON members said only one of the examiners personally encoded the questions. The others had to be assisted by three PRC secretaries who did their jobs a week before the June 11 and 12 exams, they added.

Ten to three days before the exams, they said, questions were "extracted" then printed at the 11 PRC testing centers.

"There was a premature release of the actual test question for Sets 3 and 4," the BON members admitted. The whatever reasons, those sets were released in Baguio and found (their) way into the hands of the complainants who filed with the PRC a complaint against the entire Board of Nursing."

Fernandez said that while the actual test had been leaked, "we were not the source."

Still, how come Cordero was being tagged as the mastermind of the leakage?

"It's all about professional jealousy," he claimed. "The accusations are all lies."

Politics

Without naming names, Cordero blamed politics within the PRA that purportedly frowned upon his "stature" in the international nursing community.

He said he used to be a board director of the Geneva-based International Council of Nurses, a federation of 129 nurses associations working mainly in the areas of professional practice, regulation and social economic welfare of nurses worldwide.

He claimed he was the only Filipino on his to be part of the organization.

"I'm hurting because I didn't do anything wrong, yet I'm being accused of so many things," he said in tagalog. "Worse, I'm known not only here but also in the international community. I can get my visa anywhere in five minutes."

"We're planning to file criminal and civil cases against whoever is liable. My name has been dragged down. I'm really ashamed in the world of nurses," he said.

Cordero said he resigned as PNA president if only to "protect the integrity" of the nursing profession.

"I didn't want the name of the PRA to be dragged down just because of this issue," he said.

A NURSING graduate displays her placard as she shouts slogans during a rally in Manila.

Let passers take oath, schools appeal

By Joey A. Gabieta
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—THE TWO NURSING schools in Eastern Visayas have asked the government to allow students from the region who passed the controversial nursing examination to take their oaths.

Dr. Antonio Lim, dean of the college of nursing of St. Scholastica's College of Northern Samar, and Rilita Pelimelo, dean of the college of nursing of the Remedios Trinidad Romuldez Medical Foundation (RTRMF), said there was no valid reason to require their students who passed the nursing board to take a new examination.

Many of the passers of the June tests in Western Visayas and Central Visayas had asserted that the temporary restraining order issued by the Court of Appeals on Aug. 17 and took their oaths as professional nurses on the same day or a day earlier at the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) offices in Cebu and Bacolod cities.

Both Lim and Pelimelo said their students passed the examinations without benefiting from any leakage.

"We are a Catholic school and have taught our students the virtue of honesty. To accuse them (students of resorting to cheating or leakage is something deplorable," Lim said of the accusers.

Lim said that of the 91 graduates from St. Scholastica's who took the nursing examination, 62 passed.

He said the reported leakage had jeopardized **the chances of their graduates finding jobs.**

Pelimelo said the RTRMF had shown a good track record in the nursing exams.

In the recent examinations, she said 115 of its graduates passed while only 10 failed.

"We abhor any form of cheating," she said.

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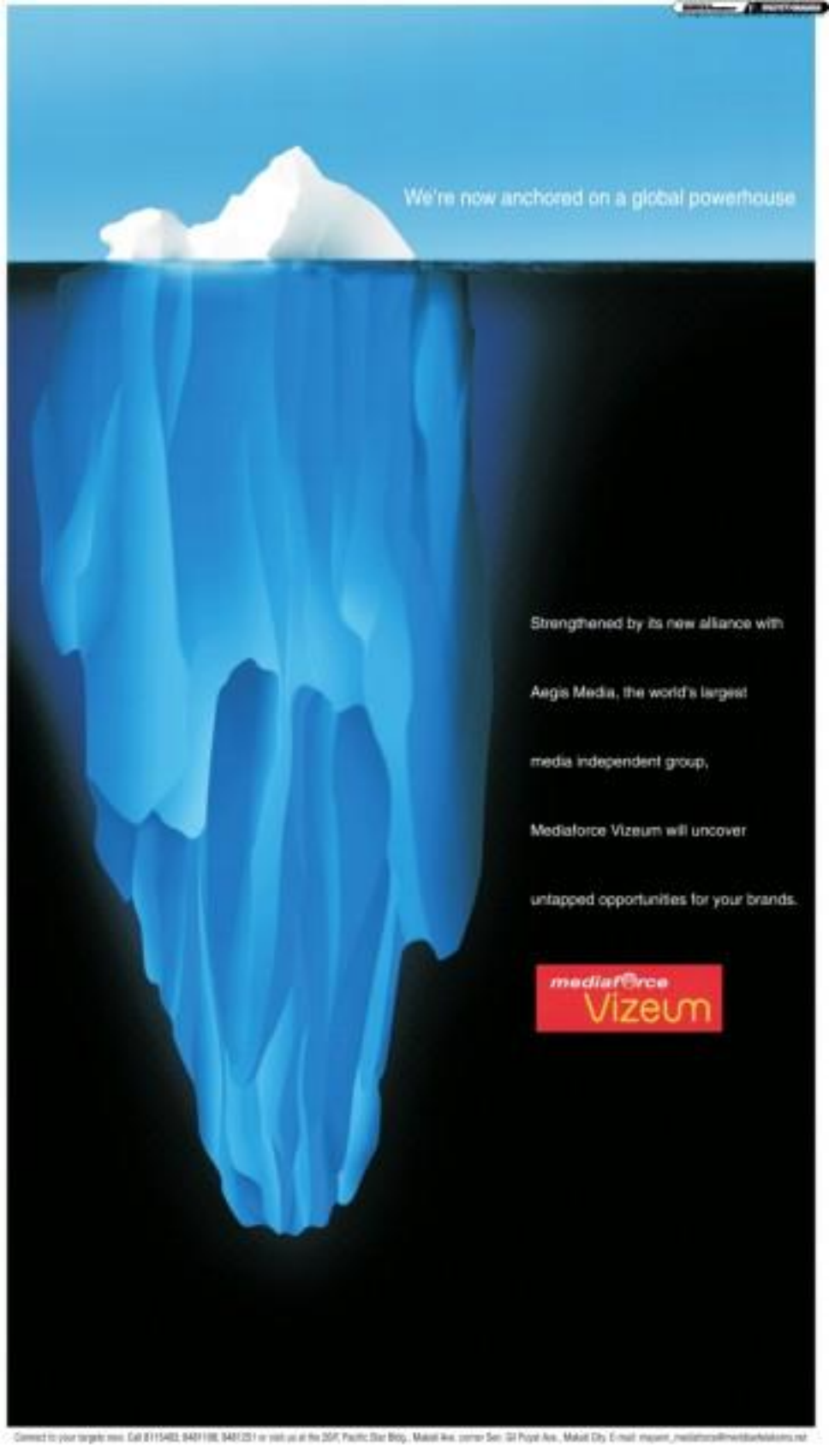
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Militants miss their nemesis who was 'funny, sophisticated'

By Luige A. del Puerto

RETIRED DIRECTOR VIDAL Quesol's harshest critics are they who the police gunned down than close chatted with them on the streets.

Militants described Quesol, who left the Philippine National Police on Aug. 13 on reaching the mandatory retirement age of 56, as a "funny guy" and an officer "with a sense of humor."

Fond of Quesol

"We were fond of Quesol. He was the only one in the entire PNP who made us laugh," said Jerry Albert Carpio, spokesperson of the militant Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (Pamalakaya).

"He was often funny without intending to be. Minsan kasuya (You could talk to him)," said Bayan Muna Representative Satur Ocampo.

"We had many criticisms of him [per], but he kept the lines open and that was a good starting point," Bayan said, adding that he had yet to see that with the new breed of the National Capital Region Police Office, Director Reynaldo Wells.

Human side

The two activists' encounters showed a human side to the often bitter, at times violent, confrontations between leftist militants and the police, and proved that even fearsome people on opposite sides of the ideological fence inspire for much other's position was possible.

Carpio's group had once labeled Quesol the "grand master of mass killing" after the former had claimed that a group of communist rebels was out to kill grenades in rallies during President Macapagal-Arroyo's last State of the Nation Address.

"We miss Quesol. He was a character," said Carpio, noting the officer's penchant for using nonsensical Filipino words and for writing English poems on the side during his three-decade career in the uniformed service.

QUESOL

Filipino words

One time he described militants then "Ang mga militante ay kinapanon ay mawawalan at mahahadlk." (The militants in the countryside are violent and merciless.) Kinapanon and mahahadlk are not your everyday Filipino words.

Quesol was the Metro Manila Police chief at the time Makabayang Isagani assailed the controversial calibrated preemptive response (CPR) policy, which replaced the long-standing policy of maximum tolerance during street demonstrations.

Psy-war operator

Officials tolerably clashes in the streets, earning for the President the militant's tag of "fascist."

Activists regarded Quesol as one of Mr. Arroyo's top "psy-war operators."

"There was no doubt about it. And he lived up to that expectation. He did it in his sophisticated and funny way, injecting a sense of humor into it," Carpio said.

Other officers just kept a poker face, he said.

A member of Philippine Military Academy Class of 1973, Quesol was one of the more quotable police officers of his time, a fact acknowledged by his classmate, now PNP Director General Oscar Calderon.

Quesol once asserted the "no permit, no rally" policy under the CPR should be challenged "not under the hood of the sun but under the cold scrutiny of the courtroom."

Police assistance

Although she was luckily carried off by cops during a protest rally in Quezon City last March, Akbayan Rep. Risa Hontiveros-Baraquel was not being arrested but was simply being removed from harm's way was the way Quesol put it.

"The sure one was being arrested? She was taken out of the rally site because of an impending dispersal," Quesol had told reporters. "She was taken out of danger."

He also described the act of forcing Baraquel into an official vehicle as "police assistance."

Patented smile

Basing his last days in the service, Quesol—a widower who has a 6-month—often visited the PNP Press Office, exchanging banter with reporters and jibeing officials when everybody else was busy ripping up their stories.

Militants remembered his interview with Ibu Abunda on ABC television a few days before he retired.

Abunda asked him if he had had a television in the past. He smiled and confessed he denied it. He just said, "There's so much thing as a mistress, only friends and lovers." Then he flashed that patented Quesol smile," Carpio said.

Across the NATION

Oil spill takes heavy toll on fish sales

By Hazel P. Villa
Inquirer Visayas

NUEVA VALENCIA, GUIMARAS—FISH VENDOR Isidro Flores lazily gazed at motorists and villagers passing by the Igang Public Market here, vainly hoping that he would be able to sell some fish to the crowd on their way home from the Salvación Elementary School that President Macapagal-Arroyo visited on Saturday for a meeting with the National Disaster Coordinating Council.

Despite an advisory from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) that fish caught off the waters of Guimaras are perfectly safe to eat because fish swim deeper or away from the oil spill, no one is buying.

"They are all still scared of the bunker fuel oil that may be found in the fish," said the 64-year-old occasional fisherman.

He said BFAR emphasizes as the residency of Guimaras and Iloilo that their laboratory tests showed there were no residues of bunker fuel oil found in fish caught off the waters of northern Iloilo and Guimaras and it was perfectly fine to eat them.

Presidential Management Staff chief Arthur Yap said Saturday that an estimated 13 percent of the 2 million liters of bunker fuel is believed to have leaked from the hold of oil tanker MT Solar 1 that sank off the waters of southern Guimaras on Aug. 11.

Another hit were the towns of Nueva Valencia, Sibunag, and San Lorenzo in Guimaras. Affected in northern Iloilo were the towns of Ajuy, Concepcion and Estancia Barrio.

Misconceptions regarding "poisoned fish" have hurt the sale of fish vendors in the areas that has plummeted by 30 percent, said Flores.

What fish he sells for P60 to P90 a kilo now go for P50 and still there are no takers, said Flores as other vendors milled around him, nodding their agreement.

A FISH vendor in Iloilo City holds dried fish that she says are guaranteed safe from the oil spillin Guimaras. AP/OLIVER MACIAS/QUICKSTUDIO

"The fishermen go to sea at a cost of P500. They get three to five kilos of fish, which they sell to us for P60 a kilo. At the rate things are going, they'll either stop you," said the fish vendor.

"People here won't even buy fish even if it came from towns in Iloilo with no oil spill," said Rogelio Calanda, barangay captain of Buenavista Delaya, one of the areas now undergoing clean-up operations.

Capiz board OKs ₱200,000 allocation for Guimaras

By Felipe V. Colina
Inquirer Visayas

ROXAS CITY—THE PROVINCIAL board of Capiz on Friday approved a P200,000 financial aid to Guimaras province that has been devastated by the worst oil spill that has hit the country.

The oil spill, caused by the sinking of oil tanker MT Solar 1, has already destroyed more than 300 kilometers of coastline, hundreds of mangroves swamp, and is marine reserve.

The tanker, owned by Iranian Alam Development Corp., was loaded with 2 million liters of bunker fuel belonging to Petron Corp. and was on its way to Zamboanga when it sank off Guimaras Island on Aug. 11.

Gov. Victorio Dexlejo requested the board to approve the release of the financial aid amid reports that other provinces were also planning to give assistance to Guimaras. The League of Provinces has earlier approved a P500,000 aid to Guimaras.

Roxas City also planned to give assistance to Guimaras. The city council of Roxas passed a resolution last Thursday asking Mayor Antonio del Rosario to allocate any amount as financial aid to Guimaras.

The mayor said he would discuss with the city officials how much the amount would be and where to send the donation.

Several members of the Rotary in also requested business establishments in Capiz to also do their share by donating oil-absorbent products such as mats, corn husks, hair, among others. These oil-absorbent items will be used for the cleanup of the oil spill in Guimaras.

Board member Bernard Lauzon has asked concerned government agencies to meet and discuss ways to prevent the spread of the oil spill to Capiz. He said that Dehelig, which is in Capiz, the seafood capital of the Philippines, would be greatly affected should the oil spill reach it.

The oil slick has reached certain parts of northern Iloilo and continues to threaten Negros Occidental.

Labor feud at pineapple firm alarms growers

DUTY
A worker goes about his duty helping rescuers by hand a massive oil spill that spread bunker fuel in pristine waters and covered marine resources with sludge in Guimaras.

PALIMBANG, SOUTH COTABATO—Workers of pineapple giant Dole Philippines (Dolefil) here have threatened to go on strike following failed collective bargaining agreements (CBA) negotiations.

But Dolefil said it would have to temporarily stop its operations if no takeover push through with the strike.

The dispute involving the company and the laborers, who are affiliated with the National Federation of Labor Unions-Kilusang Mayo Uno Dualtu-BMCL, has alienated residents and Dolefil contract growers.

"How could we pay our bank loans if the company would stop operation? The pineapple growers were worried that lands used as collaterals to the loans would be foreclosed by the banks," Billy Batoa, a grower, said.

Dolefil has contracts with hundreds of growers here to produce 200,000 tons of pineapple per year, in addition to its farm properties of 9,17,000 tons of pineapple.

Growers also supply 30,000 kilograms of papaya to the fruit company.

The operation of Dolefil has spurred the economic development of the municipality, officials say. Many residents, Batoa said, depend on the company for livelihood.

In an Saturday, over 50 Dolefil laborers were finalizing their plans for a strike, about 2 days ahead of the scheduled field a peace caravan in a bid to convince the laborers and Dolefil to settle their dispute amicably.

They were also joined by other Dolefil employees.

But Dualtu-BMCL said the negotiations were sore and that the only option left for them is to go on strike.

Jose Tenael, Kaffa-BMC chair, said he was optimistic the union, with about 5,000 members, could convince enough workers needed to stage the strike planned on Sept. 15.

He said the union tried its best to settle disagreements with Dolefil through peaceful means, but the management has taken a "hardline" stance against the demand of 30-percent increase in wages.

The average Dolefil employee receives P356 per day.

Jessrey Dell Catapang, Dolefil communications supervisor, declined to issue further comment saying the management wanted to the keep issue internal. *Agustin Z. Zenit, Inquirer Mindanao*

N. Vizcaya execs hounded by talk of bribery over STL

By Melvin Gascon
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAYOMBONG, NUEVA VIZCAYA—The allegations of bribery continue to haunt members of the provincial board here following the approval of a resolution allowing the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office to operate a Small Town Lottery in the province.

Board members interviewed by the Inquirer said some of their colleagues have started to complain that they have not been given their "areas of" be approving the resolution.

"They felt cheated. The people who promised them all sorts of things are now passing the buck," a board member said, referring to the Inquirer text messages sent to him by some of his colleagues.

By a vote of 7-2 with four abstentions, the 13-member Sangguniang Panlalawigan approved a resolution to allow STL operations here.

The approval prompted amid reports that the officials were offered P30,000 each for endorsing the measure.

The board's latest decision was a complete turnaround from its position in April, when it passed a resolution asking the PCSO to ignore the province from the test run of STL.

"Gambling, in any form is uneconomic, anti-social and inimical to the well-being of the family as it results in economic dislocation and delinquency among children," the board said in its earlier resolution.

"Some of the board members are now disgusted that they are having a hard time getting their share," another board member said.

Sought to comment on the bribery allegations, some board members said they did not know about any offer. Others did not respond to the Inquirer's calls and text messages.

Reports said Cesar Jalosa, who is eyeing to operate STL here, went to the board members' houses to seek their support for his application for endorsement.

But Padua denied reports that he bribed the officials so they would endorse his franchise.

He called the charges "malicious fabrications."

"The approval of the STL resolution was the means thought of by the local government to stop the operations of jueteng in the province. the money was even spent in order to pass a measure that the board members have long wanted," he said.

On Sunday, Catholic Bishop Ramon Villena, denied claims of board members who supported the STL operators that while the measure is opposed by jueteng, he was, however, in favor of the government-sanctioned lottery.

"Whatever said that I am in favor of STL is lying," Villena said in a statement over Church-run radio station dwRV.

Cops nab 3 in bank robbery, recover ₱4M in loot

CALAMBA CITY—POLICE arrested three men, including the alleged mastermind, who were suspected of being behind a bank robbery here in separate operations on Saturday, police said on Sunday.

Police also recovered P4.2 million of the P5 million lost in the heist.

Senior Supt. Gil Mendo Lobos, CESU-4 Calabarzon chief, identified the arrested suspects as Randel Monares, officer in charge of the Blue Eagle Security Inc., and Peter Tagalogon, security guard of Thunderbird Security Services.

Supt. Roland Bueno, Calamba police chief, said they also arrested Reynaldo Pura, brother of another suspect Marvin Pura, in a follow-up operation in Lemery.

Marvin Pura, the fourth security guard when the robbery happened, remains at large.

Lobo said Monares was arrested while on duty at the Walter mart Mall in Barangay Real at around 5 p.m., Saturday.

He said the suspect at first denied his involvement in the robbery at Easy Peso Rural on Tuesday night but did not resist arrest.

Monares's arrest came shortly after Tagalogon was apprehended at the Manila Domestic Airport terminal before he was about to board a plane flight to Zamboanga City.

Police recovered P500,000 from him which, Lobo said, could be part of the loot.

Supt. Floriano Baliaman, chief of the CESU-Laguna, said they arrested Monares after Tagalogon owned up to robbing the bank and pointed to Monares as the one who planned the heist.

"Tagalogon said that Monares who talked to Pura and planned out the bank robbery," Baliaman said the investors.

Bueno said they would file charges against the three today.

He said the heist should serve as a lesson to establishments hiring the services of security agencies as well as to the security companies hiring security guards.

"Maybe the security agencies should be stricter in hiring people. They should also clearly examine their records in the respective communities they belong," Bueno said.

Police records showed that it was Pura who let an armed man inside the bank at around 10 p.m. Tuesday while four bank employees were already inside the vault counting money.

Once inside, Pura and his accomplice locked up three of the employees inside the kitchen while they ordered Bank teller Maureen Morrison to open the vault.

The suspects then put the money, amounting to almost P5 million, inside a bag and went outside the establishment.

They boarded a waiting motorcycle driven by another man and sped toward nearby Cabuyao town.

Bueno said Pura had been with the bank for 4 years.

"The employees said they even treated him (Pura) like a 'boss,'" Bueno said in a text message to the Inquirer.

Police recovered more than P5 million and a bit part of the loot subsiding the Nano Pura bank heist.

Senior Supt. Joel Reganddia said operatives of the Batangas Police Provincial Office led by Supt. Leonidas Castillo, chief of the SPPO Investigation Division, recovered the loot buried beside the house of suspect Marvin Pura in Lemery City last Friday.

Castillo said the Calamba police, whose chief of police was his classmate at the Philippine National Police Academy, sought their assistance after it was discovered that Pura was a native of Batangas. *Marlon Ramos and Bobby Q. Labañan, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

Chavit wants BCDA execs probed on Poro Pt.

TAGAS CITY—ILOCOS SUR GOV. LUIS "Chavit" Singson has urged authorities to investigate officials of the Bases Conversion Development Authority for supposedly promoting the operator of the Poro Point seaport in San Fernando City in La Union.

On Friday, Judge Robert Caneol of the regional trial court of San Fernando issued an injunction stopping the BCDA and the Philippine Ports Authority from operating the Poro Point seaport.

The PPA on Aug. 1 took over the operations of the seaport from Poro Point Industrial Corp. (PPIC) after the Department of Environment and Natural Resources stopped PPIC's operations due to the firm's lack of an environmental compliance certificate.

PPIC officials, however, were able to ensure a temporary restraining order and an injunction from the court.

Singson, in a telephone interview on Sunday, said he wanted an investigation of BCDA officials who would be found promoting the interest of PPIC instead of the government's.

an agency under the DOTC, the Poro Point Management Corp. (PPMC), that runs the Poro Point, is headed by a cronie of Singson.

The governor, however, did not identify these officials. But in a visit to the bayan last week, he identified BCDA president Narciso Abaya as the one conniving with PPIC.

Abaya earlier said PPIC's 25-year contract is non-bar-reapers now valid.

Singson said he wouldn't resign as governor if he would be proven wrong that the government was in a disadvantageous position in its contract with PPIC.

"We should do all [things necessary] to protect the interest of the government, not the interest of a few individuals and companies," Singson said.

He said the P68 million that PPIC pays the government yearly is so small as the company earns an average of P50 million a month.

"There is no development at the seaport. They are just using it as a parking zone," he said.

PPIC lawyer Delgado Duling in a phone interview said he was not sure of the amount that his firm was paying the government.

"But whatever the figure is, the point is the amount paid to the government is what [is stated in the] contract. That's the contract between us even if PPIC earns more, it would pay that specified amount," Duling said.

Singson said he also assured Caneol reassigned because the judge issued the TRO and injunction "without due process."

The governor questioned why the case filed by PPIC against various government agencies involved in the operations of the seaport was not raffled off but assigned to Caneol.

Duling said all parties involved in the case were given a chance to present evidence and Caneol merely ruled on the basis of evidence offered.

"So how can they say we (PPIC) were barred?" asked Duling.

"If the ruling was against us, we will follow [it]. But the question is, will they also follow [the ruling]?" he said.

Duling disputed Singson's claim that the case was not raffled off.

"There was a raffle committee to how can they say that the case was not raffled off? We could not have planned to give the case to [Caneol]," he said.

Singson informed that he had no hand in the takeover of the seaport and dismissed reports that he was interested in its operations.

He said his province had his own international seaport, the Port Salomague in Cabugao town, as he would not be interested in running Poro Point.

"Besides, I don't have any import-export business. My only obligation is to inform the government about what is happening at the Poro Point seaport, that there's no development in the past. If I don't report it, I may be accused also of protecting PPIC," Singson said.

Malacañang last ordered the temporary closure of the seaport and diverted all cargo vessels to the Subic Bay Freeport and other seaports in the country, pending the resolution of the case by the Court of Appeals.

Yolanda Lorda, Reuters and Gemelo Auditor Jr., Inquirer Northern Luzon

A SCUFFLE at the Poro Point seaport during the violent takeover of the port by government agents

Baguio mayor's suspension gets push from Palace

BAGUIO CITY—MAYOR MAURO Molintas on Monday said Malacañang has decided to let him serve his consecutive six-month suspension orders for mismanaging Baguio resources, through a series of administrative orders, for suspending parking fees in a private parking firm.

Molintas said Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita has directed his regional unit has ordered the Department of the Interior and Local Government to execute the suspension orders which were referred in June.

Ermita, a former regional trial court judge, said his next legal option is to move on his petition from the Court of Appeals.

Ermita's suspension orders sparked a division among Molintas' officials, and Vice Secretary Ed Soriano Jr. to resign in protest as Cabinet officer for regional development (CORD) in the Cordillera on July 6.

But Molintas, who also heads the governmental patrol in the province, is backed by Rizal Mayor Johnny Gilbert Frank, elected to the CORD post after President Macapagal-Arroyo talked him out of it.

The denial of Molintas's appeal was reportedly issued on Aug. 23 but the mayor said he was only advised about it on Aug. 24. He said he has yet to receive a copy of the Ermita order.

Soriano said he would preferably his functions as city mayor until he receives a copy of the order from Malacañang.

He said the only argument he made when he filed a motion for reconsideration was that "mayors are equally mandated to spend taxes that include the Constitution."

Ordinance 003, issued in 2000, legalized a memorandum of agreement with then Mayor Mauricio Domogan that made the Antoneil Pay Parking Corp. the administrator of the city's pay parking operations. Antoneil had initially offered to sell the city government unmanned parking meters if imported from Europe.

But the city council last week voted to withdraw the ordinance and has drafted a resolution to sever its contract with Antoneil.

The councilmen cited a 2000 report of the Commission on Audit, which found anomalies in the contract and its implementation.

Councilor Edilberto Tandoc, council the most glaring violation of the contract was Antoneil's failure to obtain legal deputization for its employees before they can collect parking fees or issue tickets.

"Antoneil could not get this authorization because national and fr. laws and the 1987 Constitution only grant law enforcers this right," said Tandoc.

Nonce Dia, Antoneil operations manager said the firm's lawyers were trying to deputization was no longer necessary because the firm's alternate legal guarantee is Gov. ernor 003-2000.

The city council on Wednesday voted to rescind the contract of a private investment pay parking firm, which caused the suspension of Molintas.

During a special session on Wednesday, majority of the councilors pushed for the rescission of a 12-year management contract that was awarded to Indigent Pay Parking Corp. owned by Laguna businessman Rogelio Tiu Jr.

Both a regional trial court and the Court of Appeals had previously issued temporary restraining orders preventing the rescission in 2002.

But Councilor Edilberto Tandoc, head of Commission on Audit report justified the government's action because it cited substantial anomalies in the way the contract was executed and enforced.

Tandoc's move was lead counsel for the government when it sued Antoneil's document years ago.

—Maricel Cabrera, Inquirer Northern Luzon

A CONCRETE waiting shed provides temporary shelter to a group of evacuees from communities around Mayon.

Schoolkids' performance hampered by evacuation

By Ephraim Rendon
Inquirer Southern Luzon

LEGAZPI CITY—PUPILS HAVE NOT BEEN performing well in public schools being used as temporary shelters for Mount Mayon evacuees as they have to learn lessons in shortened class periods and crowded rooms.

Most some 43,000 villagers were moved to the schools from the foothills of the volcano as evacuation officials implemented an "easier-pace class plan" that divided classes into morning and afternoon shifts.

Cynthia Bolaquiz, an English and Mathematics teacher and officer in charge of the Albay General School, observed a slump in the performance of her Grade 4 pupils.

Almost 25 percent of her 39 pupils failed the periodical exams given recently, she said.

"The performance of my pupils really declined. They did better in the three quarters than in the periodical test. The main factors that affected the learning of the pupils were the sudden changes in their environment and the adjustments we had to make after the evacuation," Bolaquiz said.

Out of the 72 hours in the Albay Central School, 35 were used as evacuation shelters. The remaining rooms had to be shared by all the 50 classes or 2,051 elementary pupils in two shifts.

Some of the rooms were not conducive to learning since they were smaller than the original rooms. My class and I had to use our small library for our classes, and because of that, the library service could only be used by other students during vacant hours," Bolaquiz said.

She added that she had to dissect the lessons that three classes were shortened to half a day.

"Math has to be taught only for 40 minutes instead of at least an hour," she said.

Bolaquiz says to take the school's problems into consideration and a new memorandum for some of the school facilities to be damaged as 116 families or 1,739 persons from Barangay Mabinitay, 8.25 km from the crater, were moved down.

"Some of the wooden windows and doors were already broken. Some of our audiovisual materials were either missing or destroyed. We will just fix things up after the disasters," she said.

On Saturday, lava continued to ooze out of Mayon's summit, officially recorded in 902 seismic episodes due to the collapse of lava fragments on the slopes, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said.

A total of 36 volcanic earthquakes were recorded, indicating continuous movement of magma inside the volcano.

Sulfur dioxide emission rate lowered to 2,440 tons per day from Friday's 5,491 tons, but the volcano was still far above the normal 500 tons/day.

According to Phivolcs, the 2,462-meter Mayon was still exhibiting mild eruptions that reached 4 unnamed hooded.

Insurgency won't hamper Quezon trade, says exec

LUCENA CITY—DESPITE THE INSURGENCY situation and incessant media accusary on mixed encounters between government troopers and New People's Army guerrillas in different parts of the province, the business environment tend to Quezon continues to rise, a Department of Trade and Industry local official said.

"Based on our records, the presence of NPAs does not affect the business trend in Quezon. The investment continues to post an upward index," said Elizabeth Mosmos, DTI provincial office chief.

Mosmos noted that the general investment climate in the province continued to remain bullish with the average rate of business expansion since reaching 2,000 annually.

The alleged fifth negative factor in business growth has no basis at all even in the province's federal 2nd districts, "she said.

Quezon is widely known as a stronghold of NPA rebels, with active activities in the two provincial districts that cover Lucena Bay and border Batangas most.

Mosmos said 99 percent of the new business investments in the province were initiated by entrepreneurs outside even up to such a existing capital of P1 million and below.

No effect

Quezon Gov. Wilfredo Enverga also voiced the impression that the alleged influence of the communist insurgents had resulted in no investment disincentives.

"The confidence of the business sector in the peace and order in the province continues to remain strong," Enverga said, citing feedback from the recently concluded business forum in the province.

Governor Vicente Gen. Dowd Ilusorio, gave a different perspective.

"Since it's their money that is at stake, the all-out war policy of the government will be a cause for alarm for any investors. For sure, the insurgency situation would surely affect the development program of the government," Ilusorio said.

He cited the past execution of Kilh rebels against a foreign road contractor in Bondoc Peninsula area.

Similarly, several local businessmen Sonny Bonardo shared the information that the prevailing outlook in Quezon of national financial situation groups still remains positive.

Queries

"As a matter of fact, I often receive queries from fellow businessmen in Manila on the what lines of business they should put up in Quezon. They are very interested. Probably due to the strategic location of the province because we have wide open seas and lots of well-maintained business opportunities," Bonardo said.

Harvard Philippine National Dolor-chief Executive Antonio Ilusorio, whose family operates Ocean's World Pasta, a resort and hotel facility in the outskirts of the city, said the reported presence of communist rebels in Quezon was not affecting their business.

Junior Sept. Victoria Cayapas Jr., Quezon police chief, described the peace and order situation in the province as "manageable."

In past interviews, a number of local businessmen admitted that they were still willing to hold to the 100% investment rate imposed despite the government's warning that the police and the military would now go after businessmen paying only tax to communist terrorists. (With J. Medina Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon)

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Entry of 'butanding' in Mayon communities seen good luck sign

By Joanna Lee Burton
Inquirer Southern Luzon

LEGAZPI CITY—THE PRESENCE of whale sharks (Rhincodon typus) in Barangay Bagacay, Tabaco in these provinces is a sign of good luck for the coastal community's according to residents.

Anna Bolaetis, 58, who has been fishing since he was 12 years old, said it was almost 10 years ago when he last sighting of the whale sharks, locally named butanding, off the village.

He said he could not forget what happened that night in 1990 when he and the other fishermen caught even since fish, which he believed accompanied the butanding to the area.

That was the only time they ever had a big catch, said Bolaetis, who also thanks for the bounty.

"All of our nets were full of fish. We spent the whole night until morning fishing," he said, adding on the number three of his small fish was bought.

The catch was big enough to load on two trucks, he said.

Asked why there was an abundance of fish, Angkel Gondonella, 70, also of Bgay, said "This is probably the blessing of the Almighty God."

Ed Abari, 49, a fisherman for the past 20 years, confirmed the presence of a number of whale sharks in the village. He said there had been previous sightings, but those were not given much attention because the people assumed did not stay long.

Abari said the people used to fear the world's largest fish because they had a reputation that all sharks eat people.

"It's really amazing and we owe a lot of them," said Arcel daughter, Josephine, 23. Her father added that young people never saw such a beast of the friendly whale sharks.

Arbaca, a senior research specialist of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, said that as of 3:30p.m. on Thursday, nine sightings and five encounters with the butanding had been recorded, the 43 p.m. three were already 19 sightings.

The largest butanding was measured 7 meters long and was spotted 50-100 meters from the shore, he said.

According to Abaca, the whale shark has similar behavior as humans. "If the butanding sees that it is being watched by the people, they will themselves. It never eat them," he said.

Bolaetis and Gondonella said they were happy with the presence of the butanding, who usually show up at low tide when the water is calm and the sea is at its darkest.

Although fish is not abundant now, Abaca said that if the whale sharks restore good luck before, "It may still be a sign of good luck today for our village."

"If you this would really help increase our villages' income and legend would become prominent because of it," he said.

Bgay said Bgay residents and other searchers that "if we want to see the butanding, we have to leave them alone. Don't harm them and don't touch them. Just watch and come with them."

He also warned them not to touch the butanding with fins, boats in that could cause its injuries from the algae, trees and other bacteria to stay away.

Troops sent to mine site in N. Vizcaya

CAMARUGOSIS, QUIRINO—ARMY SOLDIERS and policemen have been sent to a remote village here where a foreign mining company has started road clearing activities to access its planned gold-copper project site near the Nueva Vizcaya-Quirino border.

But while military and police officials gave varying accounts on the purpose of the arrival of troops on Barangay Tucod here, others believed operations that the deployment area meant to guard the activities of multinational Philippine Mining Inc. (APMI).

Teams from the Army's 5th Infantry Division and the police's provincial mobile group have been stationed in the village in the past two weeks as APMI started road rehabilitation of the 12-km mountain road connecting this town to Barangay Dalipey in Kasibu, Nueva Vizcaya.

The roads are being prepared for the expected transport of heavy equipment that APMI would use for its pre-development operations for its 19.91-million Dalipey mining venture, according to Chief Grace, APMI manager for external affairs.

The company vowed to start operations next month, despite the objections of residents in the site and the opposition of the project by their local government.

In addition, operations began as to what provision—Nueva Vizcaya or Quirino—should receive royalties, and who would benefit from the project (government or local community).

The project is scheduled to start despite the failure of local officials to resolve questions on the operations of about 500 illegal miners at the planned project site.

Senior Supt. Pedro Cachapero, Quirino police director, said he has sent troops to Tucod due to the presence of communist rebels in the area.

"There were recent sightings [of insurgents], there and also because distance is there," he said, referring to AFMI, formerly Climax Arimco Mining Corp.

But Brig. Victor Tanggawohn, chief of the Army's civil military operations unit, said the troop deployment was meant to ensure troops during the visit of Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes.

On Aug. 8, Reyes ordered the project site on Dalipey to check on the reported illegal mining activities there.

"They have not been recalled since because they are awaiting the arrival of a military official who is supposed to visit the area in the coming days," Tanggawohn said.

Cachapero and Tanggawohn declined to reveal the size of the troops as "I could be security reasons.

Grace said he was not aware of the troop deployment as to the project site.

Jarrod Manggoring, Cagayan Valley director of De Mines and Geosciences Bureau, and Bill Dale Mabeg provincial environment officer, said the troop deployment was part of patrols operations against members of a group who robbed the Quirino Provincial High School on Wednesday.

"What we heard was that the robbers escaped to the mountains, so the troops were at [at] there," Mabeg said. Mabeg Gascon, Inquirer Northern Luzon

HD LEARNER A senior Philippine Military Academy cadet looks over the shoulders of citizen's applicant for scholarship at the PMA, Thousands of young men and women applied for PMA scholarships. Many have been administered firearms parts of the country to detect new recruits on the country's private military academy. NOEL CELIS/AFP

ROUNDUP

Teeners behind water meter theft

Tricycle driver killed

Rob gang leader slain

Robbers take payroll money

Bulacan mayor gets reprieve

Bullet kills baby

Big waves delay relief aid

Cops kill 2 rob suspects

Cops nab suspected heads of rob gang

CALAMBA (3rd)—Elements of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) raided the hut of suspected kidnap-for-ransom syndicate in Barangay Pittong Lupa here and arrested five of the group's alleged leaders. Senior Supt. Orlando Lebin, CIDG-Calabarzon chief, identified the arrested suspects as Rondin Lebin, 33, motha-rock boss; Isidro Robles, 40.

Recovered from the two were a .45 cal. pistol, a 9 mm pistol, an M16 baby Armalite and several live ammunitions.

Lebin said the early morning police operation was executed by five search warrants issued by Manila Regional Trial Court Judge Reynaldo Rio.

Supt. Floriano Bellazmin, CIDG-Laguna chief, said "they escaped down on the residence of the suspects at around 4 a.m. after receiving information that it was being used as a safehouse of the kidnap-for-ransom gang.

The suspects, he said, did not resist arrest.

"We were able to surprise them. They were unprepared and did not even attempt to get their guns," Bellazmin told the business.

He said the group was entering the most active crime groups in Calabarzon region and was behind several kidnapping and highway robbery cases in Laguna and nearby provinces in recent months.

Members of the group were also targets for buy-bust operations by police agents, car theft and murder of policemen were. Marlon Ramos, Inquirer Southern Luzon

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Bombers in Metro to mark 9/11 – report

LOCAL POLICE FEAR BOMBINGS DURING THE fifth anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States as an intelligence report warned that two explosive experts belonging to an al-Qaida linked group had arrived in Metro Manila, according to a government report.

The two experts belong to the Rajah Solaiman Movement in the Philippines, according to the confidential security assessment report seen by The Associated Press Sunday.

The Rajah Solaiman Movement is a small group of Filipino converts to Islam, which has been linked to a number of deadly attacks, including a February 2004 bombing that ignited an intense hunt deep and killed 116 people in one of Southeast Asia's worst terrorist attacks.

The RSM has worked with other al-Qaida-linked groups, like the Indonesia-based Jemaah Islamiyah and the Abu Sayyaf group in the southern Philippines, in plotting attacks and undertaking joint terror trainings on Mindanao, according to Philippine military officials.

"Recent raw reports indicate suspect explosives experts of bombing attacks are the major concerns in preparations," the report said.

"With the anniversary of the Sept. 11 al-Qaida attack fast approaching and the developments in Lebanon, antagonistic attacks should not be discounted," it said.

On Sept. 11, 2001, members of al-Qaida hijacked four airliners in the US and rammed three into the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington DC, while the fourth plane crashed in a field in Pennsylvania when its passengers fought the hijackers. Over 3,000 people died in the incidents.

The report did not say whether the two alleged bomb experts were planning to strike in specific targets in Greater Manila but it said the presence of Rajah Solaiman members in an area had led to tension months in the recent past.

It cited the group's imminent threat to hit ever's Valentine's Day bombing of a passenger ferry in the Manila Bay financial district that killed four people and wounded more than 60 others.

United States and Australian officials have been concerned by the reported existence of terror training camps in the southern Philippines which they said could produce militants that could launch attacks anywhere.

The Philippine military has said it has destroyed major training camps used by the south by Filipino and Indonesian militants, who are mostly on the run from continuing offensives. AP

Reds' downfall in Central Luzon imminent, says Army

By Luige A. del Puerto

KIDDIE AFTER OUTSIDE OPER...

across the Philippine Army yesterday claimed radical victory over the communist insurgency in Central Luzon, saying the region where the underground movement started was about to be "de-influenced" of communist partisans.

"We celebrate National Heroes Day today. It also marks the start of the downfall of communism in Central Luzon as the provinces of Bulacan, Pampanga and Nueva Ecija, their usual support bases, are about to be totally de-influenced," said Army spokesperson Maj. Ernesto Torres, quoting officials of the 7th Infantry Division.

Troops said the provinces of Bataan, Aurora and Tarlac "will follow."

He claimed the division's operations had "considerably decreased their (rebels') strongholds, freedom of movement, physical strength and will to fight."

Operations against communist New People's Army rebels in Luzon have been going full-blast since after President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the military and police to wipe out the decades-old insurgency in two years. As a result, soldiers doubling as bodyguards of politicians were recalled and sent to the battlefield.

Some 1,500 soldiers were also recalled earlier from Mindanao to hunt the rebels.

Troops deployed

Early this month, officials said 10,000 troops belonging to the Armed Forces' Northern Luzon Command were deployed to rebel hosts, half of them spread in seven Central Luzon cities/ municipalities supposedly free since hosts, logistics and financial support.

Torres told the Inquirer on the phone that measures which were successful in "de-influencing" Bulacan, Nueva Ecija and Pampanga would also be applied in other provinces.

One of the controversial measures adopted by the 7th Infantry Division under Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan is flush out rebels was to ask local residents to identify certain cases, such as the rebels or communist sympathizers.

Draconian

The measure has been reportedly misused in draconian and moderate form employed of drawn allegedly committed by soldiers against those who coddled them rebels.

Asked if this new rebel strategy would also be carried out in other areas of Luzon, Torres said yes, "if that will be applicable."

"Whatever was effective in de-influencing (villages) would be used in other hotspots and provinces," he said.

The defiant forces denied the announcement of the Philippine Army that the military was gaining significant ground in driving rebels from the region.

"We believe the attacks have been conducted," said military spokesperson Lt. Col. Ramon Zagala.

Zagala also believed that some of the controversial drive-by-Palparan had the support of the AFP leadership.

"It has been hurting the enemy and by the mere fact that it is hurting the enemy, we are gaining ground," he said.

Zagala added that as a direct result of these strategies, there had been surrenderees and the military had received reports that rebels were having a difficult time getting logistical support.

MAJ. GEN. JOVITO PALPARAN, the nemesis of communist rebels for which he has been tagged "the butcher" by political activists, addresses a crowd in an anniversary rally in Mabalacat, Pampanga, on Sunday. He spoke for two hours.

"GANAHAN KO'G DAGHAN KITA."

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YOUNG DARDEVIL

A teenage boy dives into a horizontal position as he dives into the murky waters of Pasig River in Del Pan, near Sta. Ana, Manila. His diving skill may not earn him any medals but it still attracts a curious group of spectators. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Makati security worries traders

Binay: City may be open to attacks

By Tarra V. Quismundo

MAKATI BUSINESSMEN ARE WORRIED about security in the country's financial capital following the recent pullout of an elite police unit said in the absence of an official to head the city's police force.

"There is a consensus that the city may become vulnerable to criminal and terrorist attacks, and that the Philippine National Police is not moving fast enough to reassure the business community," Mayor Jejomar Binay said in a statement issued last Friday.

Ali 400 men from the PNP's Special Action Force (SAF) were pulled out of the city this month after the unit was tapped to assist the military in the government's anti-insurgency campaign. The SAF team used to man security detachments around the city's Central Business District.

"The presence of SAF was effective in deterring major criminal and terrorist acts in Makati. The pullout has left a security vacuum and the delay in posting replacement units is causing anxiety," said Binay.

Last month, Makati police chief, Senior Supt. Marberto Valerio, went on emergency leave and his deputy, Supt. Felipe Napoles Jr., took over as officer in charge. Binay said he believed that Valerio was forced to go on leave after his men served an arrest warrant on the mayor's political rival, Roberto Brillantes.

This, however, was denied by Southern Police District chief Ricardo Supilla.

Recently has there been assigned as officer in charge of the Pasay City police.

Binay, meanwhile, called on the PNP to appoint experienced Makati police chief. "We believe this should be done at the soonest possible time in order to avoid any uncertainty and instability that normally comes with the lack of permanent incumbent in a position," he said.

In a press conference on Wednesday, the mayor had rejected outright the possibility that Napoles may take over Valerio's post on a permanent basis because of the latter's truck arrest.

Napoles, formerly assigned in the Bicol region, was recently ordered detained in chief inspector by the National Police Commission for "unauthorized preservation of a motor vehicle" seven years ago, but he remains a police superintendent as he said the order for his detention was still under appeal.

Warning signs, earplugs a must for contractors in Marikina City

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

DIGGING ROADS BOMBARDING CITY?

Companies and contractors had better make sure that warning signs have been set up and earplugs distributed to affected residents if they plan to use equipment that would make a lot of noise.

If they fail to do so, they might end up being slapped with a fine by the city government following the approval of a new ordinance by the Marikina City Council.

Vice Mayor Marcos Andres said he authored the ordinance after a private contractor of water utility company dug up the road in front of his house in Barangay Calumpang two months ago.

"I had an actual experience. The workers started bringing their equipment and they started digging without any warning or notice. We were caught by surprise," Andres told the Inquirer.

"The digging was also very noisy because the workers were using jackhammers. I can tolerate the noise, but what about older people or those with illnesses who needed to rest," he added.

Because of his experience, he drafted the ordinance which was approved two weeks ago.

"Street diggings and excavations cause vehicular traffic as well as expose the public to the danger of physical harm, especially if no warning or safety signs are installed on the excavation site," the approved ordinance said.

It also ordered to the use of jackhammers and other equipment to break concrete as a "nuisance to allied residents."

To solve these, the ordinance required water utility companies or contractors to install warning and safety signs the day before the actual construction.

In addition, they should provide free earplugs to residents living within a 35-meter radius from the construction site.

Those who fail to install warning signs would be slapped with a P2,000 fine while those who would not provide earplugs would be fined P1,000, the ordinance also said.

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DID YOU KNOW

THE LABEL "University Belt" came into use in the 1960s to denote the area in Sampaloc, Manila occupied by six learn-schools and universities. Among these are the University of Santo Tomas, Far Eastern University, University of the East, National University and San Sebastian College.

Clusters of schools can be found in other parts of Manila, but the University Belt is different because of the large student population in schools in the area.

Cyril L. Bonalaste, Inquirer Research

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Stricter law regulating billboards pushed

By Tarra V. Quismundo

METRO MANILA WILL MEET on Thursday with officials of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) to determine how they can strengthen regulations on the installation of billboards along roads in the metropolis.

"We will discuss what's the best thing to do to make sense of these billboards," MMDA Chairman Bayani Fernando said in a phone interview yesterday.

"My, would get full support for an all-out campaign for the removal of billboards. I think we have enough laws to regulate them but there is not enough resolve to implement them," he added.

On Aug. 25, a huge billboard fell on the head of the late chairman of the Metro Rail Transit 3, Power supply to surrounding areas had to be cut as the billboard got entangled in electrical wires. Traffic was also snarled on the southbound side of Edsa for several hours as MMDA operatives had to work carefully to avoid causing more damage as they took the billboard down.

During the meeting on Thursday, Fernando said the Metro Manila Council—whose members include the mayors of the 17 cities and municipalities in the metropolis—would explore the possibility of drafting a resolution imposing stiffer regulations covering billboards. The resolution, however, would also take into consideration local ordinances, he added.

The MMDA is the MMDA's policy making body that creates and approves resolutions addressing Metro concerns such as traffic, flood control, and waste management.

Local governments have the power to regulate the installation of billboards in their areas since they issue permits to advertising agencies. The MMDA, meanwhile, has long contended that it has jurisdiction over the Edsa road, including the billboards in the area, since these may encroach on the road right-of-way.

In a press conference held last week, Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay reiterated that the city government would maintain its moratorium on the installation of billboards in the financial capital, a ban that was implemented in January 2003.

Some of the areas with the highest concentration are the Guadalupe Bridge and Magallanes Interchange, both along Edsa, can be found in the city.

The Makati City Hall is drafting new regulations covering billboards as part of the proposed Makati Business Code. Its zoning ordinances, a legislation that divides the city into residential, commercial, industrial and mixed-use districts.

Police precinct put up near Quiapo mosque

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE MANILA POLICE DISTRICT (MPD) has established a police community precinct near the Golden Mosque in Quiapo, Manila to reduce the number of complaints against shady individuals preying on law enforcers in the area.

MPD acting director Senior Supt. Danilo Abarzosa said their move was in response to the request of the Muslim community during a meeting with police officials last week.

"Businessmen and residents near the Golden Mosque often complained of vendors posing as policemen who threatened and extorted money from them," Abarzosa said in a phone interview.

The police chief said the precinct, the MPD's 43rd police community precinct, would temporarily be located at the Office of Muslim Affairs' old headquarters near the mosque.

The new precinct will be directly under the Sta. Cruz police station.

Abarzosa added that he has deployed nine police men, led by a police officer, to patrol the area at all times.

He also said that the Muslim community could call the MPD hotline 5120378 or send a text message to 7508PT to report any illegal activity.

"The leaders of the community likewise expressed support for our intensified anti-illegal drugs campaign, which would serve to oust pushers and peddlers," Abarzosa said.

MPD officials led by Abarzosa recently conducted a "Grand Quiapo" with representatives from different sectors to discuss crime-related problems affecting businessmen, residents, barangay officials and members of the Mosa, Manila.

Abarzosa said the barangay meeting was organized to encourage officials and leaders of Sta. Mesa's 62 barangays to help them in curbing criminality and wooding out illegal activities in the city.

"We value the participation of barangay leaders and their respective communities in fighting [crime] in Sta. Mesa," Abarzosa said.

More than 300 participants from the barangays, nongovernment organizations and different barangays attended the meeting, he added.

The police official reiterated the commitment of Manila's Finest to provide immediate assistance to barangay leaders.

"We likewise emphasized the importance of establishing a close partnership between the city police and barangay leaders in fighting off all forms of criminality," Abarzosa said.

NOT YOUR TYPICAL DORMITORY
It looks like a dormitory for women. Cramped and dark. It's even got the requisite washing hanging from the windows. These who live in this dormitory however, cannot leave the compound because they are inmates of the Camp Bagong detention center in Quezon City. (JOAN BONDOC)

JOB HAZARD
A fireman runs his face while to avoid a cloud of smoke escaping from the broken window of a house which caught on fire yesterday in Dakol, Novaliches, Quezon City. No one was reported injured in the incident. (ALEX LIBAO)

Don't throw those food scraps away

By DJ Yap

IF YOU LIVE IN QUEZON CITY, DON'T BE surprised if someone knocks on your door asking for leftovers and kitchen waste.

It will go on a good cause: To reduce the amount of garbage generated by households—and feed pigs.

In a bid to boost its waste reduction program, Quezon City has tapped hog raisers to collect kitchen waste from locators in selected communities.

Door-to-door collection

Under the scheme, the hog raisers will conduct door-to-door collection of household waste—free of charge—in nine barangays covered by the city's "No Segregation, No Collection," policy.

These are Bonifacio Lagro, Milagrosa, Santa Cruzbla, Loyola Heights, Damar, Socorro, Bilangan, Pasong Rumbok and S. Bo dilligan.

In eight months, the city's Environmental Protection and Waste Management Department (EPWMD) plan several barangays in the nine areas.

Waste diversion

During the period covered, the barangays registered a total daily waste diversion of 1,450.26 kilos, an impressive figure, according to the EPWMD.

Because of the success of the "pre-implementation," the agency is studying the possibility of expanding the kitchen waste collection program to barangays with no composting facilities.

Among the barangays likely to be covered by the expansion are Vasra, Bagong Pagasa, West Kamias, Paraiso, Culiat, Tandang Sora, Machata and Tatalon.

Less garbage

The kitchen waste collection project is a component of the city's "Ilang Basura sa Barangay" program, which aims to reduce the volume of solid waste at the point of generation by promoting such segregation in individual households.

The program was launched by Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. in July 2003 in compliance with the ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

Belmonte has constantly reminded residents that keeping the city clean is everyone's responsibility, not just the local government's.

To date, 31 barangays have fully implemented the "Ilang Basura" program, with 11 more barangays soon to follow.

Two-year program aims to rid all firms of drug users

By Volt Contreras

MENTION THE WORD "DRUG addict" and three stereotype images are most likely to come to mind: a drug dependent on out-of-school youth, the accused mastermind (boss) and all other shady characters one usually associates with dark alleys.

The following words—employer, supervisor, manager and boss, respectively—would hardly figure in the discussion at all.

However, studies conducted by the Dangerous Drugs Board show that around five percent of the country's workforce are into illegal drugs, and that the word "profile" of a Filipino drug user is one who is employed with a regular monthly income of at least P6,500.

Some about drugs ruining jobs and unnecessarily make the headlines anymore, neither do they ruin innocent police drug busts. But there is a law specifically addressing this deceptively silent menace, and a team-up between the government and the private sector has been striving to implement it for almost two years now.

Presenting the "Drug-Free Workplace (DFW) is a mission that has been pursued over the past two years by the Department of Labor and Employment's Occupational Safety and Health Center (DOLE-OSHC) and the Family Wellness Center Foundation (FWCF), a drug rehabilitation center in the municipality of San Juan.

Daunting task

The task is quite daunting: To create DFWs through DOLE's Department Order 53-03, also known as the Guidelines for the Implementation of the Drug-Free Workplace Policies and Programs for the Private Sector.

But ultimately, DO 53-03 is all about getting drug users...who are often family breadwinners—that previous sexual abuse.

According to a government policy, a firm that discovers that some of its employees are drug addicts should not immediately fire or impose disciplinary actions on them, provided that they do not have criminal records.

Instead, the company should first help them overcome treatment, according to Dr. Dulce Dait, executive director of DOLE-OSHC.

After being allowed to undergo rehabilitation, the employees should be reintegrated into the company but if they pick up the habit again, the company should then impose sanctions against them, Dait explained.

But why not fire them when their addiction was discovered the first time? "For every drug user, or (who) job you terminate, you put the community at risk," because he could be the same person you would have been counseling crimes," and FWCF executive director Raoul Crisostomo.

"Drug addiction is essential illness from which no one should be deprived of an opportunity to recover," said Crisostomo, whose rehabilitation center has treated some 500 clients since 1999. Of the total, around 45 were employees referred to the center by their firms.

The collaboration between the labor department and FWCF has produced a standard training program for companies which, under the Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002, are required to have DFW mechanisms in place.

A WORKER found to be using drugs should not be fired but should be given a chance to reform, says Raoul Crisostomo, executive director of a drug rehabilitation center. (CONTRERAS PHOTO)

Assessment teams

Crisostomo, who helped design the training program, said that under the law, any company that has 10 or more employees should have DFW "assessment teams" tasked to screen employees for drug use and facilitate the rehabilitation of those who test positive.

Since 2003, the government and FWCF have trained some 200 to 300 assessment team members.

Cast said among the local industries that have grown "more vulnerable" to drug use are those whose work sites tend to be isolated or are far away from law enforcement posts, like mining or export processing zones.

Crisostomo also revealed that drug use spiked in one telecommunications firm when it launched an aggressive promotion to recruit more customers, sending its workers out on the field for longer periods of time.

Warehouses and transport services also provide "enough space and time" for drug sessions, he said.

A DFW assessment team can screen drug users usually through random urine tests and interviews. They are, however, also trained to spot look "behavioral and physical symptoms" in workers additional to drugs.

Crisostomo noted that drug users are frequently absent, or display a "paycut" of going on sick leave. "We call them payday addicts," he said. "They miss work a day after payday because they had money to go on a binge the night before."

"They also tend to be careless, become or quarrelsome at work, their performance deteriorates," he added. "They become easy scapegoats."

The physical signs include red eyes (usually for marijuana users), abrupt loss of weight (for shabu) and weakness. Crisostomo said a shabu user's body usually gives off a "peculiar, acidic odor."

Although the DOLE-OSHC has yet to conduct a study on workplace accidents traceable to drug use, Cast said an addict's "reflexes are slower and he loses his peripheral view (which is) reduced to tunnel vision because of the narrowing of his pupils."

Keeping tabs

Once employees are sent off to undergo drug rehabilitation, their companies, through the DFW team, must coordinate closely with the rehab facility for updates on their progress until they are deemed fit to return to work, Crisostomo said.

According to DO 53-03, it is up to a company's union and management to agree on whether or not payment for employees' treatment should be shouldered by the firm.

Assessment teams are then "encouraged" to include representatives from the labor union, if the company has one, Crisostomo explained.

Back in the days when an addict's fame in the program, it's already too late for the worker the moment he's discovered," Crisostomo said. Now, they can be assured that they will be given a chance to reform.

(DOLE-OSHC can be reached at its telephone number 9250606 to 10 local 313, and the Family Wellness Center Foundation at 7246105)

Hezbollah was surprised by Israel attack

BEIRUT — THE MASTERMIND OF THE Israeli response to Hezbollah's cross-border operation in July took the Lebanese guerrilla group by surprise, Hezbollah deputy leader Naim Kassem said in an interview.

Kassem told AP-Video daily that Hezbollah had expected an Israeli assault — as some wage as part of a joint plan with the United States but it had no indication it would come in July.

"We were expecting [the Israelis would] respond at the most by bombing us in a day or two or some limited attacks or targeting certain places, such that it would not go beyond three days and some limited damage," he said.

After Hezbollah fighters ambushed two Israeli soldiers on July 12, Israel started bombing Lebanon's civilian infrastructure in a one-month war which displaced more than 900,000 people.

Israeli attacks killed close to 1,200 people in Lebanon, mostly civilians, and did damage worth billions of dollars.

Israel lost 157 people, mostly soldiers inside Lebanon.

Kassem said, "Frankly we were surprised by the great size [of the Israeli response] and by this serious attack." Two days after the war began, Hezbollah learned that Israel and the United States were planning an attack in September or October. US media have also said the United States was enthusiastic about Israeli plans to strike at Hezbollah.

"Israel was not ready. It has a wanted to prepare for two or three months more, but American pressure on one side and the Israeli desire to achieve a success on the other ... were factors which made them rush into battle," Kassem said.

The Hezbollah official said the guerrilla group's overall coordinator with the Lebanese army as it moves into parts of south Lebanon dominated by Hezbollah.

But Hezbollah will not give up the concept of resistance against Israel, as the generals that Israel continues to occupy the Shebaa farms region, battle Lebanese prisoners and overfly Lebanese territory almost every day.

"The justifications for ending it [resistance] are not yet there. When we agree on a defense plan to confront Israel, defining the plot of the resistance, the army and the Lebanese people, then we will see what the rules and rules are," he said.

The Shebaa Farms is a small patch of land claimed by Lebanon, but occupied by Israel since it captured the Golan Heights from Syria in the 1967 war. The United Nations deems the territory Syrian and said there is no reason to change that.

Israel wants the Lebanese army and a strengthened UN peace force to disarm Hezbollah and keep it away from the Israeli border, but Kassem said disarmament was an internal Lebanese matter and Hezbollah fighters will stay in their villages.

The army and the UN will not go searching for arms but with Hezbollah carrying them in public, Kassem said. Answers

A WOMAN holds a picture of Hezbollah chief Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah as she prepares for Friday prayers Aug. 18.

A year after Katrina, victims return to Dome

NEW ORLEANS — ABOUT 600 PEOPLE braved lightning and a torrential downpour on Saturday in a bid to join hands around the Louisiana Superdome and commemorate the one-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.

Nearly a year ago, thousands of people sought shelter in the cavernous sports stadium and turned it into a symbol of human suffering after New Orleans' electrical power failed, food supplies ran out and evacuation buses did not arrive for days.

The event drubbed Hands Around the Dome by Hill a few hundred people short of its goal of forming a circle around the 70,000-seat stadium that has remained closed since Katrina.

Esdras Antoine, 56, said she came to the Superdome in search of shelter after the storm forced her to spend several months away from her hometown.

Antoine endured a sweltering night at the stadium after her New Orleans home was inundated with more than 4 feet (1.2 meters) of water, then waited in line five hours to board a bus to Houston.

"Being here brings back some bad memories, I tell you," she said. "That heat was unbearable." Katrina struck the Gulf Coast on Aug. 29, 2005, killing about 1,500 in her wake and flooding 80 percent of New Orleans.

Musicians, jazz funeral-style processions and an interfaith prayer service were among activities set for Sunday, the anniversary of the storm, at the city's famed St. Louis Cathedral.

In addition, trumpeter Wynton Marsalis will lead a concert to help support musicians scattered by the storm.

A group of drummers led a parade to a podium on a plaza outside the dome where speakers including New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin vowed to bring back tens of thousands of residents still displaced by the storm.

"We will rebuild New Orleans," Nagin declared, his remarks almost inaudible above the storm's din.

Gail Glasper, chair of the African-American leadership Project, which organized the event, said the gathering underscored the "right of everyone to return, even if not to one of the recently flooded neighborhoods." Glasper, a former Dillard Parish School Board president, told listeners the group chose the Superdome site "to remember those who lost their lives, and to commemorate their resurrection project, is set to reopen Sept. 25. Reuters

A CAR enters the darkened Lower Ninth Ward by way of the Claiborne Bridge Aug. 27 in New Orleans. One year ago, Hurricane Katrina ravaged the US Gulf Coast, killed more than 1,500 people and laid bare the inability of the world's most powerful government to respond effectively to a natural catastrophe.

Pakistani rebel leader killed, says government

ISLAMABAD — A PROMINENT rebel leader has been killed in a clash in Pakistan's Baluchistan province, the government said on Sunday.

But the military said while the province Baluch nationalist and rebel leader Sardar Akbar Khan Bugti was presumed killed, his death had not been confirmed.

There were also conflicting figures for the casualty toll in the battle in the southwestern province.

Two government officials, including the provincial minister of interior, said 30 or more people — members of the security forces and rebels — had been killed in the fighting.

But the military confirmed the death of only four officers and a soldier in the battle on Saturday.

"It is confirmed, Nawab Bugti has been killed in an operation," Information Minister Mohammad Ali Durrani told Reuters. Interior Minister Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao also said Bugti had been killed.

A military spokesperson said security forces had attacked a rebel cave complex and re-charged very heavy fire.

During the battle cave collapsed, burying all those inside, including, it was presumed, Bugti, and military spokesperson Major General Shaukat Sultan. The body had not been recovered, he said.

Earlier, an Interior Ministry official who declined to be identified, said 25 members of the security forces and 15 rebels had been killed.

Baluchistan is Pakistan's biggest but poorest province. It also provides Pakistan's main natural gas resources.

Baluch nationalists have long complained that the province does not get a fair share of the profits from its resources and have been agitating for autonomy for years.

Dozens of people took to the streets of Quetta, the capital of Baluchistan, after news of Bugti's death. They burnt cars and shop-owners but there were no reports of major damage or casualties.

Pompey launched the operations three days ago and smuggled on the rebels in helicopters, a security official said.

Bugti, who was born in 1927, was a former chief minister of the thinly populated province of deserts and mountains.

With a shock of white hair and a white handlebar moustache and beard, he was for years one of Pakistan's most disruptive politicians.

A powerful tribal leader, he went underground late last year, joining rebels who have been waging a low-key insurgency for decades.

The rebels have stepped up attacks on infrastructure, including gas pipelines, as well as security posts over the past year. Reuters

PAKISTANI rebel Bugti tribal leader Nawab Akbar Bugti in Jan. 24.

WorldBriefs

New clashes in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO — The Red Cross has had 160 foreigners in safety from the besieged capital peninsula Sunday as the Sri Lankan military claimed to killed 12 Tamil Tigers when repulsing a rebel attack on an army position. The fighting is almost at the point of intensities in the country's north-east in the early hours after many aid agencies pulled out foreign staff amid ongoing clashes between rebels and security forces. Clashes with the rebels made aviation where they could return to help tens of thousands who have fled fierce fighting between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the security forces. More than 40,000 have fled their homes in the Jaffna peninsula alone where 800 people died in 11 days of fierce fighting this month that the military claimed was a rebel push to take control of the area. AFP

3 killed in car bomb attack on Iraqi newspaper

BAGHDAD — A car bomb exploded outside the offices of the state-run news paper al-Sabah in Baghdad on Sunday, killing two people, wounding 35 and causing extensive damage to the building, police said. The blast destroyed the facades of the newspaper's production department, witnesses said. Several cars were set on fire by the huge explosion, which also left a score of vehicles crumpled. Shattered windows. It was the second car bomb attack on the newspaper this year. At least one person was killed in an explosion on May 1. Reuters

Dozens of illegals feared drowned off Mauritania

NOUADHIBOU — Dozens of illegal immigrants were feared drowned after 14 bodies washed ashore in Mauritania, while another 176 people heading to Spain's Canary Islands were rescued before their boats sank, a police official said. The 14 dead washed ashore on the beaches of the West African capital Nouakchott, probably after their boat capsized, police spokesman Ahmed Ould Mohamed Lemine told Reuters. "There are probably more dead," he said, adding that search and rescue missions on the boats usually carry 80 to 90 people," said the police official who requested anonymity. "They were certainly illegal immigrants because we haven't had any reports of missing fishermen." AP

2 journalists wounded in Israeli strike in Gaza

GAZA — An Israeli air strike hit a Palestinian vehicle in Gaza City on Saturday, wounding two journalists working for a news agency and a military translator, doctors and witnesses said. One of the Palestinian journalists, who worked for a local media organization, was seriously wounded. A cameraman working for Reuters was knocked unconscious in the air strike. Two of terrorists the area. The Israeli army said the vehicle was hit because it was acting suspiciously in an area of combat and had not been identified as belonging to the media. More than 185 Palestinians, about half of their militants, have been killed since Israel launched an offensive in June aimed at recovering a captured soldier and ending cross-border rocket fire. Reuters

Vatican faults new stem cell method

VATICAN CITY — THE VATICAN'S TOP OFFICIAL on bioethical questions on Saturday criticized a new method of making stem cells that does not destroy an embryo, calling it a "manipulation" that did not address the church's ethical concerns.

Monsignor Elio Sgreccia, who heads the church's Pontifical Academy for Life, said in an interview with Vatican Radio that the way of making stem cells devised by scientists in Advanced Cell, based in Worcester, California, remains unacceptable from a reproduction.

"And that, from a point of view that is not only Catholic, but from a point of view of laws in our zone, is a negative factor," Sgreccia said.

Advanced Cell's method "doesn't solve the ethical problems," he said.

The new method — described online Wednesday in the British journal Nature — works by taking an embryo at a very early stage of development and removing a single cell, which could operate as embryonic stem cell line. With only one cell removed, the rest of the embryo remains in full potential for development.

But, Sgreccia said, the new method doesn't address what he said was the fact that even the single cell removed by the new approach could theoretically grow into a full-fledged human.

"If the result we are seeking by — that is to reproduce — only embryonic cells — is the result of a manipulation of a process that otherwise would lead to an embryo, the ethical objection remains intact," Sgreccia said.

The current method of creating stem cells involves the destruction of embryos after about five days of development, when they consist of about 100 cells.

Stem cells are important because of their potential to transform into any type of human tissue, perhaps leading to new treatments for a series of illnesses. But the Bush and US President George W. Bush, among others, have argued that the promise of stem cells should not be realized at the expense of human life, even in its most nascent stage. AP

The WORLD

Iran leader launches new nuclear project

ARAK, IRAN—IRAN'S PRESIDENT LAUNCHED A new phase in the Arak heavy-water reactor project on Saturday, saying Tehran would not give up its right to nuclear technology despite Western fears it aims to make atomic bombs.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was speaking just days before an Aug. 31 deadline set by the UN Security Council for Iran to halt uranium enrichment—the West's biggest worry in Iran's atomic program—or face possible sanctions.

"No one can deprive a nation of its rights based on its capabilities," Ahmadinejad said in his speech to inaugurate the heavy water project.

The Arak project, once complete, will produce plutonium as a by-product that could be used to make atomic warheads. But the reactor there will produce this in a way that would be difficult to make atomic warheads. But Ahmadinejad said, using Iran's term for its arch-enemy Israel, which the Islamic Republic does not recognize.

Although Iran faces possible sanctions if it does not heed the UN deadline, divisions among world powers over how to handle the Islamic republic could delay any action.

The Los Angeles Times reported Washington had indicated it was ready to form an independent coalition to freeze Iranian assets and restrict trade if necessary, analysts say sanctions imposed by just a few states would have limited impact.

A White House spokesperson said on Saturday the United States, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany were consulting about Iran's response to the package of incentives the six offered Tehran to halt uranium enrichment.

"My call (is) about the goal of preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability," spokesperson Dana Perino said.

Iran is likely to raise further fears in Western capitals by pressing ahead with the heavy water project near Arak, 190 km southwest of the capital Tehran.

An Iranian official said the project is not a proliferation risk because heavy water has no military use. Diplomats say it is not a complex one.

"It's not a proliferation risk in itself, but the associated operations—still to be constructed—could be.

And the timing seems particularly poor," said a Vienna-based diplomat familiar with operations of the UN nuclear watchdog in Iran.

The UN Security Council resolution setting the Aug. 31 deadline to halt enrichment also tired a call by the UN watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), for Iran to reconsider building its heavy water reactor project.

The Arak complex was protected by dozens of anti-aircraft guns and surrounded by a four metre high barbed wire fence.

Photographers and TV journalists were asked not to take any images except in areas where they were specifically permitted.

The head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, Gholamreza Aghazadeh, told the students' ISNA news agency that IAEA inspectors would visit Arak next week. Reuters

MEXICAN fishermen Salvador Ontiveros, left, Jesus Molina, center, and Lucio Rendon, pose for photographers in Honolulu, Hawaii, Aug. 23, after their rescue. AP

Village defends fishermen

SAN BLAS, MEXICO—TIRED fishermen who say they endured a nine-month ordeal lost at sea are heroes to the people of this fishing village, despite media reports that some cast doubt on their epic survival story.

"This is a miracle from God," said San Blas fisherman Salvador Ontiveros, 46. "So fishermen, we take a lot of risks and depend on God's will, and those who have criticized them are people who don't want to see us succeed."

Lucio Rendon, Salvador Ontiveros and Jesus Molina say they left San Blas on Oct. 23, 2005, on a shark-fishing expedition that went awry. They were rescued Aug. 9 by a Taiwanese fishing ship near the Marshall Islands, 6,500 km away.

Upon their return to Mexico City Friday, the fishermen were bombarded with questions by reporters wondering about their remarkably good health and their survival after being exposed to the elements in a 6.25-meter open boat.

The trio says they survived by eating dorado and jurel. Molina says

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SPORTS

Editor Teddyboy S. Molinyawe

Artists' Fair

Miñoza ties for 4th with 69, wins ₱1.8M

MINOZA

WORLD CUP OF POOL

Bata, Django gain semis

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Pagunsan settles for third in Brunei

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Special Edition runs down Lakambini Stakes field

By Mwang R. Castillo

OUTSTANDING PICK SPECIAL EDITION worked from behind the pack before flashing her trademark finishing kick yesterday to win the 2000 Lakambini Stakes under veteran rider Mandito Delgado.

The three-year-old Mark Silly sipped past the pacesetters one length to win by five lengths over distance second pick Jet Setter and pocket the year's unofficial championship for fillies.

With Delgado vigorously hand-riding his mount and applying the whip fast inside entering the final two quarters, Special Edition clocked 1 minute and 54 seconds over 1,600 meters at the Santa Ana Park to win P600,000.

Her time was one seconds behind the all-comers' mark held by super horse Ipil Gold, but it was enough to give Special Edition her second big win this year after a victory in the second leg of the Triple Crown series.

"She really had a lot left for the stretch," Delgado said of the daughter of Cowsprincess out of Gold Edition, who had split times of 13, 24, 24, 24, 23 and 26.

Jessie B. Cruz-owner Jet Setter had to the final straight to nip a fading Rebecca's Magic and John Lanting for second worth P225,000, while Miss Monique, the speedball who opted out to set the pace, settled for fourth and P50,000.

Rebecca's Magic, who trailed early pacer Sunmova Class before joining the rallying group at the far turn, won P120,000.

Jose Noel G. Lanza handled Miss Monique in place of JeffryT. Zamar, who opted to ride and race-owning his own pre-maiden stint after being caught dropping handicap plate weights allowed Elaika to the inspected Stakes Series last week.

Twelve Or Bravo, who like Jet Setter, Tigers to dot ten and Special Edition to can pegged to the year's Triple Crown, entered up fifth.

Tigers roar, gobble up Eagles streak

ATENEO'S Mhyday Escalona bumps into UST's Jojo Cano.

Salvador blows GM title bid

A pool architect cries for government help

BARE EYE

Recah Trinidad

SPORTSWATCH

Alcano tops Pasadena 8-ball

Bates stagfest gets going

Rambulan at SJC 4th round up

WORLD FINALIST: Philippine lon Thomas Lee (second from left) shows off his certification as Cosa A champion he received from Dr. Rainier Trisi, president and CEO of Daimler Chrysler Southeast Asia during the Mercedes/Toyota Asian Regional Final held in Queensland, Australia early this month. Lee flies to Stuttgart, Germany via Cathay Pacific Airways this week to join eight others in the World Final.

PARTICIPANTS of the Cebu leg are all green and ready to go at the starting line.

Delposo, Sevilleno jot race milestones

UST is UAAP's all-time best in basketball

CLEAN LIVING

Manuela R. Hugo

I WAS ASKED RECENTLY by the hosts of GamePlan to rank the greatest UAAP basketball teams of all time in part of their Sunday telecast of the ongoing 69th season of the University Athletic Association of the Philippines.

I knew my rank-ing would elicit a lot of disbelief replies, especially from the loyal followers of the Maroon-and-white schools, but I am prepared to suffer their slurs.

After mulling over what was left of the UAAP records...most of which were either lost or burned during the Pacific War—and asking the experts to help iron make my divorce-crunch easier, I came out with a ranking of the top UAAP basketball teams which figured prominently since the league was founded on Sept. 27, 1938: University of Santo Tomas, the Ateneo University and University of the East.

The Tigresses of 17 UAAP cage titles, the UST Growling Tigers—then known as the Glowing Goddes—topped my list based on their strong showing, particularly during the pre-war years, the 1960s and until the mid-'80s and early '90s.

Roberto Tharsis, Nonoy Reyes, Danny Florencio, Ben Jumrel Val Bonifacio and Ed. de Mesa were familiar names. UST also dominated the UAAP cage wars in the 1990s, winning four straight championships from 1993 to 1996 under coach Aric del Rosario.

Several UST players represented the Philippines in the Olympics, World Basketball Championship and the Asian Games. Ramon Morales and Ray Flores played with the Philippine team which placed third in the world tourney in Rio de Janeiro in 1954 under coach Germino "Jim" Silva. In the National Open, UST won in 1937, 1940 and 1942. Two of its most outstanding players before the UAAP era were Primitivo "Tatang" Martinez and Jacinto "Jumping Jack" Cuna Eyap, who were both enshrined in the Hall of Fame together with Alfredo Thomasmon Ilej and Gabby Pajarillo.

When the UAAP resumed in 1946, UST won all its games to capture the championship again, forming the members of the team: were Ramon Campos Jr., Proceso Deparanoque, who became a congressman and governor of Bataan; Valentin "Bo" Ednalan and Aldan Makasiar, a retired colonel who served as president of the Philippine Olympic Committee in 1980.

The current up-and-coming Tigers, spearheaded by Jeric Teng, Jimmy Alapag and Dondon Hontiveros, have been making waves in the UAAP wars.

Among the members of the team were Luis Tolentino, the Ateneo brothers, Blackie and Hamilcar, who became a member of the Philippine team in the 1948 London Olympics; Jose "Pinoking" Dochenga, who played in the 1952 Helsinki Olympics; and Virgilio "Baby" Dalupan, who later moved to UE where he became its director of physical education and coach of the Red Warriors, the most dominant UAAP team in the 1960s until the early '70s, winning seven straight championships from 1965 to 1971.

The Tamaraws were the first UAAP champions in 1938.

It is now the winningest school in the league with 59 titles hacked under its belt. FEU superbased players in the Olympics, inter Games and ABC (Asian Basketball Confederation) tournaments: Blandino Ilarmeza, Andy de la Cruz and Edgardo "Dag" Falgueras (1948 London Olympics), Mariano Jarmen and Jose Ezcbarguen (1952 Helsinki), Garry Cua (1960 Rome) and Ernesto "Boy" Arana, Manny Asuncion and Arturo Ilarmeza (1964 pre-Olympics in Yokohama, Japan). Injured members represented FEU in the 1954 world championships.

Other members were Johnny Abarrientos, who donned the colors in the 1998 Bangkok Asiad and Herminio "Bigay" Astorga, who shone in both the NCAA and UAAP in the 1980s. In 2003, the Tamaraws, headed by coach Koy Banal, won the Ateneo-Blue Eagles championship in 2005.

UE also made big hit. The Red Warriors, under legendary coach and Hall of Famer Dalupan, won a total of 10 UAAP basketball championships, winning seven straight in the from 1965 to 1971.

It went to last UAAP crown in 1985. UE contributed a lot to the country's Olympic team: Garnco and ABC campaigns, among the Warriors who became household names in the 1950s. Held cross were Canonacio Dr. in Jr. and Roehl Madarang, who became a councilor in Caloocan City and presently a member of the Red Bull coaching staff. Others UE notables included Allan Caidic, Jerry Codiñera, Benny Mariano and Robert "Bonsai" Jaworski, the "Living Legend" who became a senator. Jaworski boasts as impressive record in the hard court he never won three decades in both the Athlete Hardy Industrial Commercial Athletic Association and the PBA.

He retired in 1999 at the age of 52, "the oldest man ever to play pro basketball anywhere in the world," according to avid sports fan Paul Morral.

SMB-RP bags Brunei title

Seigle named MVP as Pinoys crush Aussies in final

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN—JIMMY Seigle was perfect from the field last night, shooting 10 points in the four Bilgaed RP Team demolished the Barwin All-Stars, 96-65, to win the 6th Shell Belanda Brunei championship.

Seigle was named the tournament Most Valuable Player despite averaging less than 20 minutes of playing time.

"I told the boys to treat this game as if it were our last (as a national team)," coach Chot Reyes told the locomo to an overstretch.

"This championship, like our just accomplishment (against Lebanon), brings with it mixed emotions," Reyes continued. "It's a pity because we really do not know whether we will play in another tourna-ment again."

The Philippines continues to be suspended from playing in an unofficially pending the result of a crucial Thai case traveling in Japan.

The Filipinos, who won this tournament for the second straight year, made the title game after disposing of a rough playing Saudi Arabia side, 75-48, Saturday night at the National Indoor Stadium here.

HONTIVEROS

SACRA

Dondon Hontiveros had with all eyes while Dennis Miranda, Chico Ramla and Noy Castillo suffered bruises like kids bullied to a playground.

Even Asi Taulava, Mark Telan, Jimmy Nebia and Sunny Seigle weren't spared as they got bumped, bashed and smacked in frustration by their outclassed rivals.

"The other team wasn't even concerned about playing basketball. They just want to throw their bodies at us and play a rough," said Asi Mayad RP Team coach Chot Reyes after the Filipinos avenged a title showdown with the Barwin All-Stars.

The Australians, seeded third in the semifinals, stunned the fifth Singles, 94-83, in the other semifinal game.

"They got pissed off because they couldn't score," said Reyes. "There was even a time in the third quarter that we're getting down on that situation."

The Filipinos raced to a 15-0 cushioning with Taulava and Peña hitting 8 over in the late and Hontiveros and Seigle draining their three pointers.

Mark Telan, then came up with eight points in a 14-1 run.

Jimmy Alapag

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SPORTS

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US puts on show

Routs Aussies, faces Germans next

ANTHONY
Top scorer

SAITAMA, JAPAN—CARMELO Anthony scored 20 points, and the Americans smothered Australia in the second quarter and run away to a 113-73 victory Sunday in the second round of the World Championships.

Joe Johnson added 15 points, and Dwyane Wade had 13 for the Americans, who allowed only two baskets and six points in the second period to erase a 16-point halftime lead. The United States shot 54 percent from the field, including 11-of-27 from 3-point range, and held its rivals to 33.6 percent.

"That gave us shots that when we really got focused in and play defense," Anthony said, "we can do some damage."

The United States (6-0) advanced to a quarterfinal matchup Wednesday against Germany, which beat Nigeria, 79-77, in the first game of the day behind 23 points from Dirk Nowitzki, the All-Star forward from the Dallas Mavericks.

"I think we're as ready as we're ever going to be right now," LB point guard Chris Paul said.

The German were the lowest medalists in the 2002 World Championships.

The Americans were sixth that year, their worst performance ever in a major international tournament. But they continue to look like one of the favorites in Japan after surpassing the 100-point mark for the fifth time in six games.

"They're pretty good," Australia's Brad Newley said. "Oh, they're very good. They overused us."

The Americans are averaging 109.3 points in the tournament. All 12 players scored against Australia.

And this time, the defense was there, too. The Americans weren't always sharp on this end during pool play, when they allowed 82.6 points per game.

"Coach K made it a point to let us know good our defense was," swingman Chris Bosh said. "We probably played our best defensive game."

Andrew Bogut, the No. 1 pick in the 2005 NBA draft who just completed his rookie season with the Milwaukee Bucks, led Australia with 20 points, but his was scoreless for a stretch of more than 13 minutes, when the Americans outscored the Australians, 45-14. AP

TEAM McLAREN MERCEDES
CORPORATE PARTNER
KEEP WALKING
JOHNNIE WALKER

Cink floats past stumbling Tiger

AKRON, Ohio—STEWART CINK CAPItalized on Tiger Woods' longest streak of bogeys in nearly 10 years to take a one-stroke lead Saturday at the Bridgestone Invitational, shooting a 6-under 64 and moving atop the leaderboard after three rounds.

While Woods bogeyed four straight, Cink made two great putt saves early in his round to help shape a 3-under 207 total.

Cink moved into a position similar to 2000, when he took a third-round lead and went on to win at Pinehurst South's week after he was named a captain's pick for the Ryder Cup team. He was picked again for the US team by Tom Lehman on Monday, but his lead two years ago was five shots.

Besides Woods, also within a stroke Saturday were Ernie Els of South Africa and Lee Westwood of England, who matched Cink with 64.

"I've got a lot more of a dog fight on my hands," Cink said. "I don't control my own destiny nearly as much as I did at that time. So it feels quite differently. The one thing that is consistent from the Pat played well and putted well this week."

Lee took advantage of Woods' exit, later by running off three straight birdies around the turn to build a three-shot lead, but he gave them all back over the final seven holes, including a 3-foot par putt he missed on the 16th, its second up-and-in miss.

Given his history at Firestone—four consecutive tri-tight years, seven outside the top 10—Woods appeared to enjoy control of the tournament when he dropped in from 25 feet on the third hole for birdie to build a two-shot lead.

Then came a transformation that shook up the leaderboard.

It started with a three-putt from the back of the green on the par-5 fifth, followed by a 7-foot par putt that he missed after hitting into the bunker. On the seventh, he pitched to a simple chip and came up 5 feet short, missing that par putt. AP

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Gov't urged to address worsening red tape

IN THIS ISSUE

48 days to register a business, 197 days to secure permits

■ A US hand, a Senate trap/B3

By Norvel W. Dizon@gn

THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD FOCUS ON CUTTING red tape if it wanted to boost the country's global competitiveness as an investment location

as it takes an average of 48 days to register a business and 197 days to secure all the essential government permits, a meeting of business leaders and economic managers last Friday found out.

According to the Philippine Exporters Confederation, where the government and the private sector are represented, the issue of bloated red tape and corruption in government has been identified as one of the most constraints to doing business in the country.

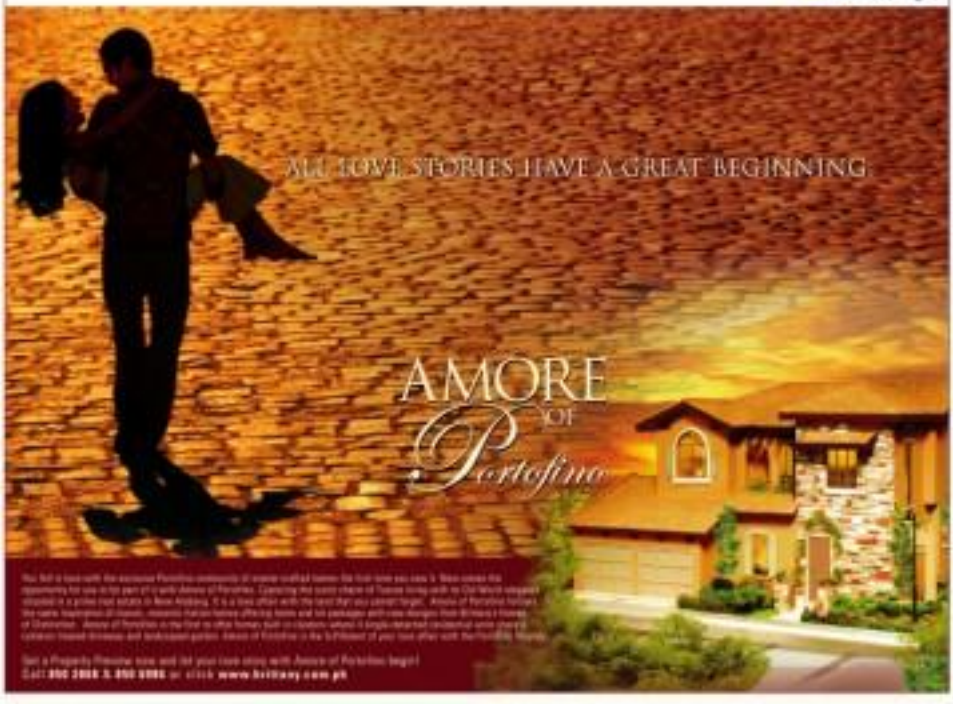
Philexport said Sagittis Bautista has cited that seven "unaccounted," lack of transparency in the process of securing the necessary papers for duty exemptions, circuitous procedures and bribery.

"In getting through these labyrinthine processes, an investor has to suspend whatever he is doing to attend to the requirements of the government agencies," the group said.

Philexport added that excessive red tape was identified as one of the root causes behind the credibility and debt of the Philippines in its global competitiveness ranking.

In the latest World Bank study, GOV'T to

Brittany



The Clusters Of Amore:

Offering A New Lifestyle Concept In Residential Living

Amore of Portofino, the new 11-hectare enclave in the exclusive Portofino community of New Alabang, introduces the concept of "Clusters". This harks back to Amore of Portofino's Tuscan influence, where warmth and camaraderie is established among neighbors without sacrificing privacy.

In a cluster, 4 single-detached residential units share a common secured driveway. The driveway becomes exclusive to the owners of these residential units. Two clusters will share its own landscaped pocket garden that adds charm to the place.

The Clusters concept gives owners an opportunity to meet and get acquainted with their neighbors who share an appreciation of the beautiful Amore of Portofino landscape-cradled by trees and, constantly caressed by the cool wind. A bond built by the common appreciation of the Old World elegance of Portofino.

The Amore of Portofino Clusters-a new lifestyle concept, a new way of looking at residential living.

Why the rich get richer

THE TRADING OF A LARGE NEWSPAPER Ad isn't friendship proclaimed? "Technology got these entrepreneurs to the top"...and we are familiar top names to Philippine business attending to how technology puts them the edge. The problem is, access to technology is normally skewed towards the rich, because technology costs money. The poor, meanwhile, get left even further behind, in a phenomenon that is now commonly called the "digital divide."

The common lament that the rich are getting richer while the poor are getting poorer arises out of certain natural forces in not receiving (proportionately a market-based one). Left unchecked, market forces and socio-political institutions could lead the gap between rich and poor to keep growing, so it in fact has in most of the world.

Regressive taxes

Our need not look far to see many of the other forces that thwart an ever-widening wedge between the rich and the poor in our country and in most others elsewhere.

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

Our tax system has consistently been assessed by researchers to have an overall regressive effect. That is, the poorer you are, the bigger the percentage of your income that is taken away by virtue of various kinds. Unfair, you will say—but unfortunately and almost inevitably true. This comes about for at least two reasons. First, our government mostly relies on indirect taxes (taxes that can be passed on by the one directly being taxed)—exemplified by the VAT, customs duties, excises and other transaction taxes that have an inherent tendency to form part of a larger proportion of the income of the poor than under current circumstances, this is almost inevitable because it is much easier for the government to raise large amounts of revenues from these types of taxes. On top of this, direct taxes that are designed to take more out of the rich—like taxes on income and wealth—are more easily evaded or avoided if the first is alleged, but the second could be legal (to collect taxpayers).

Failure of education

Our educational system has turned in to another gap-widener, because the public education system, owing to severe budget constraints, is not able to provide the quality education that the rich can readily obtain from expensive private schools, including those abroad. But even more basic is the government's inability to provide adequate quantity of public education. The same budget constraints keep us from providing the necessary classrooms, books and teachers necessary to make even only basic education accessible in every Filipino child, no matter where in the country he or she may be.

The economic and political elite are thus able to perpetuate themselves in a highly polarized society. Education, richer than being the great equalizer it is meant to be, has turned into the exact opposite under our economic and political realities.

Big business edge

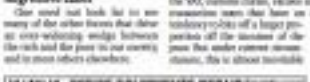
Big businesses are able to keep costs lower than those of their smaller competitors because they can obtain their inputs under volume discounts. "Cheaper by the dozen" is a principle that gives big business an edge over smaller ones, and as such, helps widen the gap between rich and poor.

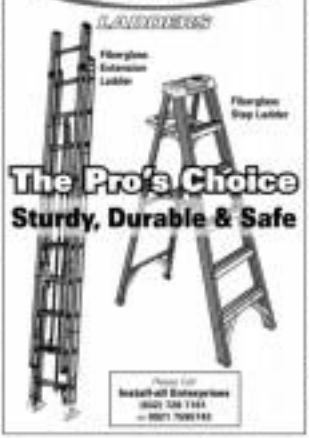
A bigger enterprise is also able to make use of cheaper and more production technologies. This explains why small tailor shops have become all but extinct, swept aside by the wave of much cheaper—and mass-produced garments produced by large enterprises owned by the rich.

Bank financing is much cheaper and more accessible to big businesses because they are perceived by the banks, rightly or wrongly, as lower credit risks. Even without this differing risk perception, banks normally prefer to deal with a smaller number of large clients than with a larger number of smaller ones, as it means lower transaction costs, and in turn, larger profits.

Infrastructure bias

Still another factor favoring the big and the rich is the tendency for infrastructure investments, whether publicly or privately funded, to





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INGASCO INC's SUBSIDIARY TAIYO NIPPON SANSO PHILIPPINES, INC. (TNSPI) NEW ECOZONE EXPORT ENTERPRISE

Shown in photo are : (from left to right) Rommel C. Agpaoa, Treasurer ; Murphy Ihu, Local Partner ; Norihiko Ishikawa, CEO and President ; PEZA Director General Lilia B. de Lima ; Raymond B. Ong, EVP and COO; Teodorico S. Madrinan, VP Admin. and Atty. Joanne Vivi Ibanez of BOI

The Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) has granted TAIYO NIPPON SANSO PHILIPPINES, INC. (TNSPI), a 100% subsidiary of INGASCO, INC., a PEZA Certificate of Registration as an Ecozone enterprise for its P1.1B investment in Philcrest Industrial Estate - Special Economic Zone in Nasugbu, Batangas to engage in the manufacture of Liquid Nitrogen, Oxygen, and Argon.

The certificate of registration was signed on Friday, August 20, 2004 by PEZA Director General Lilia B. de Lima, after late monthly basis confirmed by His Majesty the Emperor of Japan a declaration of the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star. The signing was attended by Japanese and TNSPI executives headed by Messrs. NORIKO Mitsuru, President/CEO; Murphy Ihu, Local Partner; Raymond M. Ong, EVP/COO; Rommel C. Agpaoa, Treasurer; Teodorico S. Madrinan , VP Admin and Atty. Joanne Vivi Ibanez of BOI.

According to Mr. Raymond Ong, EVP/COO, the new plant is expected to start its commercial operations on October 2005 and its total expansion of 10,120 cubic meter per hour of combined liquid nitrogen, oxygen and argon (except of INGASCO's current capacity of 8,120 cubic meters per hour. The new plant's production constitutes to a specific volume capacity of : Liquid Nitrogen - 60,504 gal/day ; Liquid Oxygen - 15,504 gal/day ; Liquid Argon - 9756 gal/day.

Mr. Raymond Ong further stressed that, "since our output is categorized as "Critical Supply" (especially Liquid Nitrogen to Semiconductor and Electronics Industry) to different industries, and considering current supply condition , this serious investment is to support our current clients in the whole industry and to part of our "tangible commitment" in maintaining INGASCO's capability and furthermore secure current and future operations of our committed business partners and customers".

Mr. Norihiko Ishikawa, President and CEO of INGASCO and TNSPI said " Industrial Output are invisible but indispensable to almost all major industries including Semiconductor/Electronics industry. As a leading industrial gases manufacturer , we are very much confident that with this huge investments, we shall be capable of sustaining the great growth of the major industries and help fuel the economy as well as and encourage other potential investors to come and invest in the Philippines."

INGASCO INC. is 70% ownership Taiyo Nippon Sanso Corp. of Japan, one of the world's leading manufacturers of Air Separation Plants and other Gas Plants , and 30% by a local partner.

A US hand, a Senate trap

COCKTAILS

Victor C. Aguavivo

BAD A SENATE IN-vestigation pushed through last October, the PCGG Commissioner Pineda Mendo would have been confronted with a delivery voyage of a brand-new Camry from Toyota Bel-Air.

The said receipt, plus such-talented client information from the BIR Double Star branch, had been produced under the direction of and, in the BIR case, obtained personally by a US citizen enlisted by foreign nationality restrictions in this country.

The American, actually a Filipina millionaire who had renounced her Philippine citizenship since she moved to New York in the '70s, had also retired and dusted a number of senators to pursue an investigation on the Presidential Commission on Good Government and Malacañang nominees in the architect Del Rosario Group.

In addition to the legislative lobbying, the US citizen has waged a negative publicity campaign against the Elilli nominees, with legal research conducted by the Ross Espinosa law firm.

How do we know all of these? Because Cocktales has been furnished a number of documents, including the Senate papers collated under the direction of the Ross Espinosa law firm for the public hearings.

A number of those negative information had also found their way in previous Cocktales columns.

With the Senate showdown postponed, the US citizen left that same evening, but not after leaking out the Mendo information to another newspaper, with the promise to submit to the country for the next hearing.

Moral of the story?

While Filipino outsiders are being easily profiled and even unjustifiably in US parts of service, a Bow Valley who had long resented her Philippine citizenship is being given the royal treatment in the Philippine Senate to pursue her factional war against Malacañang nominees.

If you think this is bizarre, wait until you hear how the US citizen, even in the confines of her Upper East side condo, obtains inside information from the inner sanctum of the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Yuchengco finances

THE PRESIDENTS CEO of the YuChengco Group, Edgardo G. Lacsamana, wants to completely deny an Aug. 16 news story, saying he has never filed any affiliate who works for the family-owned construction company or that any company money had ever been spent for the construction of a Forbes Park house. In short, everything is family-duty to the company, Singson claimed.

That is not what the other side claims.

According to the grapevine, Singson's youngest siblings have decided to order the family board to stop spilling into their public arena out of concern for their ailing parents.

Money-go-round

■ THE DEPARTMENTS of Business-world, Bonanza-Interim, Sun.Star/Cebu-Sun. given his continuing differences with Businessworld president Barbara Lorenz.

■ THE SUPREME Court has decided to make another look into the "Overnight Billionaire" case, where a retired college teacher was given a favorable court appraisal in accusation by her late's alleged wife on the 34-hectare Mamonte compound behind Ayala Heights in Diliman, despite the Mamontes already having obtained a favorable Supreme Court ruling over the same property way back in July 1994.

Oral arguments for the en banc hearing has been scheduled in October.

Heard through the grapevine

HOUSE mother heads pressed and watch the case out of court, Imelda Lucio Tan could end up on the witness stand to claim the P30-million damage suit filed by suspended Manila Golf member Rodolfo Soliman.

Soliman, of PAL fame, is dragging up the so-called Lucio Tan Jr. affair in his suit against the club's powers and former governing boards.

(Email: cocktales_pda@philstar.net or cocktales_pda@yahoo.com)

Gov't ...

A-xxx page 6

ing, the country gained 12 ticks among 131 countries/economies/cases in doing business.

"Red tape, which often results in astronomical costs and the waste of valuable time in doing business here, will be one of the key problems which the National Competitiveness Summit on Sept. 20 is set to tackle, with specific actions already identified," the opposite said.

The group also identified the needed concrete actions and plans to survival topic: identification of which agencies create the most bottlenecks; streamlining and decentralization of business processes and putting them under one umbrella; dissemination of policies and procedures; review and immediate implementation of the e-Commerce Act as it applies to government;

Automation of business processes and link up agencies involved in business processes leading to paperless transactions; build up information technology-based Philippine Business Registry that integrates the databases of both the BIR and the SEC and harmonize business registration, data requirements and payment systems; and overhaul Bureau of Customs processes and procedures and make them more transparent to plug revenue leakages.

"The list of things that can be done to reduce red tape in government systems has been getting longer as more cases on the ground reached the working team," Pakkiyan said.

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PSB BATANGAS RESIDENTIAL LOTS
Lipa Countryside Estates, Lipa City (near Balagtas Brgy. Hall)

PSB BATAAN RESIDENTIAL LOTS
Las Villas De Apolo Subd., Lamao (near Jardines, Richwoods)

PSB CAVITEX RESIDENTIAL LOTS
Brgy. Tejeros, Sta. Rosa (near Tejeros Convention Center)

PSB LAGUNA RESIDENTIAL LOTS
Paradise Valley Resort & Equestrian Center, Malitlit Valley Rd., Liliw, Laguna (beside Malitlit Valley Resort)

PSB LUBAO RESIDENTIAL ZONE
Bonifacio Hill, San Isidro, San Pedro City

PSB MEXICO RESIDENTIAL LOT
Tuktukan Subd. Brgy. San Isidro, Sta. Rosa (near Villamirian Forest Resort)

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Transco awaits SC decision on fate of power line

By Abigail L. Ho

THE STATE-RUN NATIONAL Transmission Corp. (Transco) continues to await the final decision of the Supreme Court regarding an appeal for the court to reconsider or order or shut down the crucial 230-kilovolt (kV) Tuguegarao-Baliwasak power transmission network.

Transco president and chief executive Alan Orbe said the main line had filed its motion for reconsideration as early as last April, but the high tribunal has yet to make a final ruling.

In its appeal, he said Transco reasoned that shutting down the transmission line network would cause massive power outages in many areas around the archipelago, including the Makati central business district, the Ninoy Aquino International Airport domestic and international terminals, and the Nbia Metro Rail Transit 3 (MRT-3).

If the transmission line network would be transferred underground from its current overhead location, Transco would also have to spend 10 times more than what it would usually spend for putting up overhead lines, he said.

"We'll also have to draw at least half of the television capacity. That will result in load-shedding," he added.

The Supreme Court in late March issued an order preventing National Power Corp. from availing electricity to the 230-kilovolt Incat Aczarta-Baliwasak power transmission network until it could be proved that the lines did not pose any threat to public health.

The high tribunal upheld the decision of a Makati regional trial court in 2000 preventing Napocor from availing electricity in its cables from Incat in Pantabangan to Aczarta Asn. in Quezon City.

The lower court's ruling was based on a petition filed by residents of Barangay San Miguel in Makati who had opposed the transmission line project because of health concerns.

No free lunch

From page B1

is skewed toward areas and sectors which are already more progressive to begin with. Metro Manila and its environs, and the more urbanized areas of the country in general, continue to take up a lion's share of infrastructure investments, in spite of the fact that these areas already account for the bigger shares of output and income in the economy.

But one can replace "in spite of" in the previous sentence with "because of." Economic realities dictate that more investments will tend to be made where there are already more incomes to begin with. Meanwhile, depressed areas especially in more remote areas in Mindanao and in the far-flung reaches of Luzon and Visayas must settle for piecemeal portions of the infrastructure budget. And so, we have yet another reason why the archipelago remains very much underdeveloped, far-less-necessary we shall deal on these in another column.

Comments welcome at chobito@yahoo.com.

BAR

Second Agrarian Reform Communities Development Project (ARCDP II)
Rehabilitation of 1.0 km. DATAG-CARAWAY Road
Loan 7152-PH

August 21, 2006

The Government of the Philippines (GOP) has received a loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) in the amount of $10,000,000.00 equivalent to cover part of the cost of the Second Agrarian Reform Communities Development Project (ARCDP II) and intends to apply a portion of the proceeds of this loan for payments under the contract for Rehabilitation of 1.0 km. Datag-Caraway Road under Contract Number RARD 08 (12) 04 RLSB (AE).

The Municipality of Datag (Province of Bukidnon) now invites eligible Bids from eligible Bidders for the Rehabilitation of 1.0 km. Datag-Caraway Road under Contract Number RARD 08 (12) 04 RLSB (AE). Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the Municipal Agrarian Reform Office and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. everyday except Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.

DESCRIPTION OF WORKS

Item No.	Description of Works	Quantity	Unit
101	Clearing and Grubbing	9.0000	Sq. M
102 (1)	Roadway Excavation	1,000.00	Cu. M
102	Excavation for Structure	480.00	Cu. M
103 (1)	Embankment using Excavated Materials	1,000.00	Cu. M
201	Aggregate Sub-Base Course	625.00	Cu. M
202	Aggregate Base Course	625.00	Cu. M
311	Installation of Culvert Pipe	12.00	Lin.M
311(2)	Concrete Retaining Wall Culvert	600.00	Cu. M

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the Guidelines for Procurement under IBRD Loans and IDA Credits, dated May 2004, and is open to all eligible Bidders as defined in the Guidelines for Procurement. Bidding will be conducted using the National Competitive Bidding procedures as specified in the Implementing Guidelines and Operations Manual for the Second Agrarian Reform Communities Development Project (ARCDP II) dated August 2006, which are acceptable to the World Bank.

Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from the Municipal Agrarian Reform Office and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. everyday except Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.

A complete set of Bidding Documents in English may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of PHP5,000.00 on or before August 28, 2006. Bidders shall submit their Bids at the address below on or before 10:00 A.M. on September 28, 2006.

The LGU-MPDC of Datag, Province of Bukidnon will host a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested Bidders on August 28, 2006 at 10:00 A.M. at the Municipal Mayor's Conference Hall, Municipality of Datag, Province of Bukidnon.

Eligible Bidders may submit their Bids or the deferred letter of or before 10:00 A.M. on September 28, 2006. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the form of CASH, MANAGER'S CHECK, BANK DRAFT/GUARANTEE or IRREVOCABLE LETTER OF CREDIT in an amount of PHP126,000.00 or an equivalent amount in a freely convertible currency. Bids that are received after the deadline for submission of Bids will be returned unopened. Bid opening shall be on 10:00 A.M. September 28, 2006 at the Municipal Mayor's Conference Hall, Municipality of Datag, Province of Bukidnon. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' authorized representatives who choose to attend. Bidders' authorized representatives who choose to attend shall submit proof of their authorization to sign on behalf of the Bidder at the time of the opening of Bids.

Minimum Experience Required: Bidder has 1 unit, 100,000 hp current Diesel Motor Vibratory DU-12 compactor, Road Grader (7 unit), (10 hp) payloader (1 unit), 6 wheeler dump truck (3 units), 10 wheeler dump truck (1 unit), 4 wheeler dump truck (1 unit), 6 wheeler dump truck (1 unit), 10 wheeler dump truck (1 unit), 4 wheeler dump truck (1 unit), 6 wheeler dump truck (1 unit), 10

Fiscal stability seen giving gov't enough funds for pump-priming

Economist warns against poll spending

By Doris C. Dumlao

MEDALLA

THE GOVERNMENT CAN FREE UP SOME P68 billion to increase infrastructure and social spending next year—this only if the newly attained fiscal space would not be used to buy political clout during the local elections, according to economist Felipe Medalla.

In a recent speech before his peers at the Foundation for Economic Freedom, the UP economist and former socioeconomic planning secretary raised the government's paltry allocation of subsidies if it would be before all to dig the fiscal space for economic growth or for reducing the debt-to-GDP (gross national product) ratio.

While he stressed the urgent need for the government to resume its belt-tightening, Medalla expressed concern that the President's legitimacy problems and the forthcoming 2007 election year would make it hard to "decongest" properly.

"The worst case is if the 2007 budget will be used to make sure that anti-impoverishment will get weakened," Medalla said.

"If that's the case, we're better off paying down debt," and used for the most productive use the money properly," he said.

Medalla said the government must now is a good position to increase deficit spending again...but only for as long as the funds would not fuel the intended benefit rates.

He estimated that over and above salary adjustments for teachers and net-multi internal revenue allotment for local government units, the government could decongest its spending by at least P68 billion next year.

"But here is the improvement in fiscal and national position gives government space to move forward," Medalla said.

Even without counting in the significant revenue from the expanded value-added tax, Medalla said the recent improvement in the government's fiscal position had been dramatic.

"After adjusting for NIRA, levies-budgetary account and inflation, but not for population and economic growth, the national government now virtually is budget balance by end of 2005," he said.

"The improvement in fiscal position is even more significant when the impact of the power rate hikes is factored in," he added.

In spite of successive 25 Federal Reserve rate increases, he said global interest rates would not likely trigger a Philippine debt crisis similar to what happened in 1983-84.

However, Medalla posed the challenge: "Is there a way of decongesting good public expenditures if the impetus can't be up with the 2007 elections?"

"If we should say the fiscal space to improve physical and human capital, it's very important to communicate to the market and public-that how we are using the fiscal space," Medalla stressed.

For this year, Medalla said decongestion of spending would be too late because the government was still lagging for a supplemental budget at this time.

"Remainment of the national budget will result in a real adjusted national government surplus of P1.25 billion," he noted.

However, he noted that the government's capital spending was still the poor both in the amount of items of books and relative to 1996.

He said this meant that the improvement in the fiscal position was "at the expense of more children dropping out of school."

"The Philippine government's current expenditures is lower than in Malaysia and Thailand and higher than Indonesia's, which is now to a position to increase social expenditures due to the rehabilitation of bad subsidies," Medalla said.

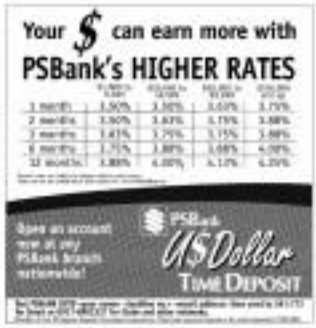
He noted that the country's social expenditure assessment is only 6 percent of GDP versus Malaysia's 8.6 and Thailand's 8 percent.

Transco awaits SC decision on fate of power line

In its decision, the Supreme Court said there was enough evidence that the power lines could be endangering the health and safety of residents in the area where the lines passed through.

According to the Department of Energy, however, a joint environmental test conducted by the Department of Health and Environment (DOH) showed that the actual electric magnetic field radiation levels of the three transmission lines were not harmful to public health.

The test, the DOH said, showed that the electric and magnetic field readings were below the limits set by the DOH and the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP).



Sluggish trading seen to continue

Dearth of market-moving news here and overseas

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

TRADING IS EXPECTED TO BE SLUGGISH this week in the absence of market-moving news and as foreign fund managers take client-mirror "break, shelter[r] mid.

Asia-20 Candle of First Grade Holdings and the market was expected to continue consolidating as there was not much incentive to invest.

August is usually a period for consolidation," he added.

Local investors are seen looking for bargains after the market's slide last week.

All Capital Securities noted in a weekly note that stocks fell for a second straight week, given a less selling spree on Friday and a dearth of market-moving news to feed the domestic and international scenes.

The market gave up 55 points last week or 2.3 percent to close below the 2,300 psychological mark.

The PSEi ended the week at at a month-low of 2,275. Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. led the PSEi's decline as it fell 5 percent week-on-week from P1,980 to P1,890.

Petron Corp. fell 9 percent last week from the previous week's level, closing at P4.75 a share. The company was hounded by concerns over its potential accountability in a recent oil spill in Guimaras, Iloilo, said to be the largest disaster of its type in the country.

Banko Sulat L. artikli was commissioned by Petron, sank off Guimaras carrying 2.1 million liters of bunker oil destined for Cambodia.

In a statement to the stock exchange last Tuesday, the company said it was not legally or morally obligated to act aside any economic aid or bond to pay for the clean up. Nonetheless, the company has been helping contain the spill, and as of Aug. 23, it had ordered 17 fabricators of shoreline and 60 marshy zone of debris.

"Petron's bid before the end of the April 2004 level would be an opportunity for investors looking (for bargains)... Recall the panic effect on SBS, QPX during the height of the monpoxis tragedy. The issue has almost 1.5 percent and fell to P18.50, but has since recovered to P19," Banko Sulat analysts said, emphasizing a slow dumb of the story." All Capital Securities noted.

2TradeAsia.com said the market would also likely watch developments from overseas.

Wire agencies reported that market oil prices rose Friday on supply concerns due to forecast that tropical storm Ernesto over the Bahamas may intensify into a major storm and hours that four might disrupt reports. If he by economic sanctions over its nuclear program.

According to the National Hurricane Center (NHC) in the United States, a tropical depression—tentatively north of Nicaragua was expected to become a tropical storm later Friday. The depression has grabbed the market's attention owing to its flight toward the Gulf of Mexico, where oil platforms produce between 25 and 30 percent of US crude.

The United States is the biggest buyer, the world's fourth largest producer of crude. In line with a UN Security Council resolution, the United States and its European allies insist that Iran must stop enriching uranium by Aug. 31 or face sanctions. Iran, which has resisted the curbs (program is for peaceful purposes), is the second biggest player in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries after Kingpin Saudi Arabia.

"Any attempt to comply with UN regulations would help cap further increases in crude prices, and capped stable consumer prices for the remainder of the year. Should the issue evolve as Iranian, however, missile-moving negotiations are to be expected," 2TradeAsia.Com said.

Philippine Stock Exchange

(In Pesos Or Units)

Issue	Price	Low	Close	Volume
FINANCIAL SERVICES				
Bank of the Philippine Islands	57	57	57	57,000
Bank of the Philippine Islands - Rights	0.1	0.1	0.1	47,700
Bank of the Philippine Islands - Warrants	0.1	0.1	0.1	1,000
China Banking Corp.	49	49	49	1,000
Equitable PCI Bank	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co.	48.5	48	48.5	1,000
Philippine National Bank	48	48	48	1,000
Philippine National Bank - Warrants	0.1	0.1	0.1	1,000
Rizal Commercial Banking Corp.	30.5	30.5	30.5	1,000
Security Bank Corp.	49.5	49.5	49.5	1,000
HOLDING FIRMS				
Ayala Corp.	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Ayala Land, Inc.	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Ayala Land, Inc. - Rights	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Ayala Land, Inc. - Warrants

Peza OKs 18 new projects worth P812M

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE PHILIPPINE ECONOMIC ZONE AUthority said it had approved 18 new projects worth P812 million, with expected average export take of about $159 million a year.

Peza Director General Lilia de Lima said the projects were expected to create 3,000 new jobs.

De Lima said three of the new projects—worth P367.3 million—were engaged in the information technology sector.

Also, she said total investment commitments as of Aug. 30 reached a total of $95.3 billion or 22.3 percent higher than the P78.8 billion posted in the same period of 2005.

Of the total amount, foreign investments accounted for P50.2 billion while economic deals open to Filipinos reached P5.1 billion.

There were 205 projects approved between Jan. 1 and Aug. 30.

"The expected annual average direct employment to be generated by these investments is 53,712 or 13.4 percent higher than year-ago's 44,077," De Lima said.

During the period covered, IT investments approved by Peza expansion amounted to P5.2 billion or 91% percent higher than last year's level.

Since the peakout were 69 IT projects that account for a projected average direct employment creation of 24,350.

In July, Trade Secretary Peter K. Ricks said he expected his optimism that investments in the country would pick up due to "renewed investors confidence" although total investments approved by the Department in the first half were down by a little to P1.98 billion.

Ricks said growth industries such as tourism, logistics, health and wellness, tourism, and IT-enabled services were being hampered through public-private partnerships. These industries, he added, were providing new opportunities for investors.

Earlier this month, the Joint Foreign Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the Philippines urged Malacañang to take more active steps in liberalizing the entry of investments from abroad, saying that the list of sectors where alien interest were banned has not changed much in the past half decade.

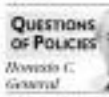
JFC members include the American, Australia-New Zealand, Canadian, European, Japanese and Korean chambers and the Philippine Association of Multinational Companies Regional Headquarters.

In particular, JFC noted that the 70% Regular Foreign Investment Negative List, which was supposed to be promulgated through an executive order within the year, had few changes compared to the existing list.

The list of industries, which sets limits if not outright prohibition of foreign interest, is issued every two years, with the last one having been spelled out through EO No. 389 dated Nov. 10, 2004.

Existing laws restrict foreign ownership of land ownership, mass media, public utilities, gambling or gaming and defense-related activities.

Leakage



THE UPROAR OVER THE LEAKage extended surrounding the licensure exam for nurses has prompted at least five Congressmen to file bills seeking a temporary halt to the undertaking of those who passed the exams. I hope the court decides on the petition soon.

Let's all sit back and settle down. To start, pending cases questions his power to file such a petition before the court

RP eyes end to IMF post-program monitoring

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES, CREDITED FOR having trailed itself out of the fiscal rut, is no longer keen on extending the International Monetary Fund's Post-Program Monitoring (PPM), which will lapse in April next year, top government sources said.

"Maybe it will just be allowed to lapse," a top government economic manager told reporters, stating that talks were revived on the planned exit from the PPM.

The country was placed under the PPM in 2003 when the country graduated from its last IMF-funding program.

Another government official said the PPM—previously regarded as a seal of good housekeeping—is not found to read.

A Finance official said the country's sound macroeconomic fundamentals put it in a good position to exit from the IMF monitoring.

The PPM provides for frequent consultations between the IMF and members whose country programs had ended but still outstanding outstanding credit with the Fund. The consultations focus on policies that have bearing on external viability.

The IMF conducts a review on the Philippines versus a year under the PPM, the last of which was completed early this month.

Under this monitoring scheme, the IMF can offer its advice but it can no longer impose policy conditions such as those on monetary aggregates and public sector borrowings as done under country programs.

"There will still be Article IV consultations (which cover members of the fund), and this will continue even when you don't have any outstanding debt to the IMF like the United States," the official said, noting the IMF would still play a role in terms of surveillance and technical assistance.

Prior to the PPM, the Philippines has had 20 different financing programs with the Fund, whose funding packages were used to stabilize the country's balance of payment position. In these years, an IMF mission from Washington visited the country every quarter.

The last IMF mission from Washington, led by Mr. Paul Thomsen, commended the Philippine economy's good performance notwithstanding higher oil prices and projected that the domestic economy would likely remain resilient. The mission expects the economy to expand by 5 percent this year and 5.5 percent next year even private investment start to pick up.

However, the mission urged the government to shore up spending for infrastructure and social services in order to make the most out of recent gains from fiscal reforms, particularly the expanded value-added tax. The mission noted that the government's expenditures through the first semester were less than anticipated and that there would be room to raise productive capital and priority spending during the remainder of the year, while continuing to meet the deficit target.

"This will allow the full realization of the benefits of VAT reform and divert resources towards much needed public infrastructure," the mission said.

The IMF mission, headed by James Gordon, recently conferred with government economic managers, as part of the Fund's post-program monitoring.

The IMF mission said new revenue-raising measures, such as the rationalization of tax incentives, might be needed. "Sizable fiscal adjustment is unavoidable if existing arrears are to be cleared over time."

"At the same time, careful monitoring of other parts of the public sector, such as government owned and controlled corporations, will help avoid any weakening of the fiscal consolidation efforts by national government," the mission said.

Gov't to let PPM lapse in April '07

MWCI seeks better terms for $30-M loan

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE ANSALDO GROUP'S WATER SUBSIDIARY, Manila Water Company Inc., is negotiating for better rates and better terms for a $30-million loan it previously acquired from a foreign bank, company officials said.

Clarifying its disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange last week when it said it "would restructure its existing loans," MWC-I said it was seeking only lowering of the rates not longer-repayment period.

MWCI president/chief executive T. Aquino said the business this would improve the company's credit standing and cash flows.

MWCI's chief financial officer Sherisa Nuesa explained in another statement that this was the company's way of taking advantage of the improving credit situation.

Nuesa said the firm would keep the 10-year tenor of the loan but preferably at better terms and lower rates.

Nuesa refused to name the foreign bank as negotiations were still ongoing. The company recently acquired some P2 billion in loans from a syndicate of local banks to partly finance its capital expenditure next year.

The company ended the first semester with water sales reaching a record 933 million liters per day (mld), 6 percent or 56 mld higher than the level in the same period last year. Intended to address commercial losses, coupled with efficient network management, water losses in Ansaldo's concession area improved to 30.2 percent, a 6-percentage point reduction from year-ago.

Year-to-date revenue rose to P9.20 billion, up by 12 percent year-on-year. This was brought about by the continued effect of tariff adjustments (TFA) and the 6 percent growth in water sales.

Earnings before income tax and depreciation (ebitda) hit P3.79 billion, while net income reached P1.23 billion, 23 percent higher than the P960 million posted in the same period last year.

Total assets were at P20.07 billion, up by 14 percent from December 2005 level.

MWCI is touting its record of connecting thousands of homes in Metro Manila in a bid for a slice of water privatization action elsewhere in Asia.

MWCI, which has run a concession in the east zone since 1997, said it had raised the number of households with 24-hour-a-day running water by about 80 percent to 593,000 and cut leakage from the system to 33.6 percent from 63 percent.

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Continental, KLM seek increase in fuel surcharge

By Rica T. Chrisostomo

CONTINENTAL MICRONESIA AND KLM Royal Dutch Airlines have joined the bandwagon at the Civil Aeronautics Board for an increase in fuel surcharges on passenger tickets.

Continental sought a $26 increase in the levy on one-way tickets from Manila to Hawaii or the US mainland, and back, from the current $16 levy per ticket.

KLM wants a $5 fuel surcharge hike for its to-continental sector and North Atlantic sector, and $2 for its intra-Europe sector.

If approved, the fuel levy for KLM's inter-continental sector will increase from $40 to $66, while that for the North Atlantic sector will rise from $42 to $47. The surcharge for its intra-Europe sector will go up to $17 from the current $15 per ticket.

Early this month, Philippine Airlines Inc. (PAL), Cebu Pacific Air and Orient Airlines, Ltd. had sought government permission to increase fuel surcharges.

In separate petitions to the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB), the airlines acknowledged that any surcharge hike would result in an added burden on passengers. They however stressed that impact of the rising oil prices on their operating costs had left them no other choice but seek higher surcharges.

In its letter, PAL asked to be allowed to double its fuel surcharges on its Philippines-Guam routes from $11 to $22.

Cebu Pacific sought a $20 adjustment for our routes, Taipei-LAX and Taipei-Canada. Only Cebu Pacific focused on domestic routes, its primary source of business. It sought adjustments for six route segments. It wants an additional fuel surcharge of P149 for its Luzon-Mindanao flights, P150 for Iloilo-Visayas, P120 for routes within Luzon, P60 within Visayas, P80 within Mindanao and P60 for Visayas-Mindanao.

"Unlike other airlines that are able to increase the regional surcharges to the level that these can partially subsidize the domestic sector, Cebu Pacific's regional operations only comprise a small part of its operations," Cebu Pacific said in its letter to the CAB.

Customs clears cement importer

THE BUREAU OF CUSTOMS (BOC) HAS ruled that Japanese-owned Southern Cross Cement Corp. (SCCC) has been paying the right taxes for its cement importation, contrary to recent reports.

A BOC memorandum endorsed by Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales stated that the import declaration, as well as the duties and taxes paid for raw cement shipments processed by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) "were all consistent with those in other SCCC cement importation."

"Within the context of the declaration under Section 1(), there is no reason for the government in terms of short payment of duties and taxes or the customs valuation base in all these shipments in the same," the BOC memorandum said.

Based on the Tariff and Customs Code, Method 1 uses the Transaction Value which is the price paid or payable for the goods when sold for export to the Philippines plus other related costs.

The BOC recommended the adoption of the Deductive Method in resolving the valuation dispute" on SCCC's imports. The deductive value is based on the sale price at which the imported goods are sold in the Philippines. SCCC has already paid in part the additional import duties arising from the change in the customs valuation method, the BOC said.

SCCC is majority owned by Japanese cement manufacturers Sumitomo Osaka Cement Corp. and Taiheiyo Cement Corp.

Smart helps ease HK remittances

By Riza T. Olchondra

PLDT (HK) LIMITED YESTERDAY introduced a new service that would allow Filipinos living in Hong Kong to send funds and airtime load directly to their beneficiaries in the Philippines through the short message service (SMS) on their mobile phones.

This innovative remittance service, done through Smart's world-first SMS-based remittance service called Smart Padala, is now available on the 2320 Smart service being offered by PLDT (HK) Ltd.

"Compared to traditional remittance services, Smart Padala via our 2320 Smart service, is clearly the superior choice for Filipinos here in Hong Kong," PLDT (HK) Ltd. general manager Viboy Bautista said. "Our subscribers can now send funds to the Smart Money account of their friends or kin in the Philippines through text, anytime, anywhere."

2320 Smart—a partnership between PLDT Global Corp. and leading Hong Kong mobile carrier HK CSL—is a mobile phone service that offers subscribers more affordable call and text rates, and other innovative services from Smart.

Among these innovations pioneered by the PLDT wireless subsidiary are Dualload, Smart Load—also known as eLoad—and other value-added services offerings for Filipino overseas.

To be able to send funds or airtime load to Smart subscribers in the Philippines, the 2320 Smart subscriber in Hong Kong must simply reload his Smart Money Account from any of the numerous reloading stations all over Hong Kong for a minimal fee of HK$12. They can send as much as P50,000 per day or P30,000 per text for reimbursement.

"The usual means of remitting money to the Philippines cost HK$15 to HK$35. Using Smart Padala through 2320 Smart results in substantial savings for OFWs in Hong Kong.

There are currently some 50,000 subscribers of 2320 Smart who can now avail of Smart Padala. Because of its local sales and marketing team, PLDT (HK) Ltd. hopes to capture more of the 120,000 OFWs in Hong Kong.

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China threatens to cut RP mango shipments

By Christine A. Gaylican

A TEAM OF FILIPINO EXPERTS WILL be sent to China to verify reports that the recent shipments of mangoes from the Philippines contained pests—a claim that threatens to reduce the volume of exports to China.

China has already agreed to the July shipment of Agriculture's request to conduct quarantine officials, the DA's Bureau of Plant Industry said.

According to the DA, the move will compel China to temporarily stop a new rule allowing only fresh mango shipments from the Philippines.

The new rule will also require all Philippine products to be accompanied by export-level treatment (VHT).

Herman Gobiz, an official of the National Mango Action Team (NMAT), said it would be very costly for exporters to invest in a new VHT facility, which costs about P11 million. He said this will raise the cost of mangoes shipped to China by about P40 per kilo. The existing VHT facilities are being used solely for exports to the United States, Taiwan and Japan.

Filipino mango exporters are now urging the government to initiate up more months of diplomatic channels to come up with acceptable quarantine protocols for fresh mango shipments from the Philippines before China imposes the ban this September.

"The government has to pick up the pace in resolving this issue," said Roberto Amores, president of the Mango Producers Exporters Cooperative Inc. (MPECI) and the Philippine Food Processors and Exporters Inc. (PHILFOODEX). "Obviously the normal channels are not enough."

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Management tends to underestimate tech savvy workers

Nokia pitches new cellular phone to boost productivity in workplace

By Cherry L. Lucas

COMPANY LEADERS AND BUSINESS DECISION makers significantly underestimate the amount of work their employees do using so-called "mobile technology," resulting in the slower adoption of productivity-enhancing gadgets, a worldwide survey has found.

Called the Anne of Workforce Mobility survey, it revealed that, on the average, business decision makers believe that 22 percent of their employees use mobile phones for work-related activities.

In truth, however, over 50 percent of employees in the same organizations surveyed said that they used their mobile phones for business.

"This disparity between perceived use and actual use of mobile technology has been responsible for slower deployment within many companies," said the survey, which was sponsored by Finnish mobile phone maker Nokia.

The same survey found that, on the average, employees nowadays spend one-third of their time outside the office, and almost half their time in the office away from their desks, making the use of wireless devices all the more important for them to maintain high productivity levels.

At the same time, the paper held out hope for increasing employee productivity, noting that "the trend is changing as more decision makers recognize the benefits to their workforce and their organization from actually mobile information."

The world's largest mobile phone maker released the results to journalists recently as it marketed its new mobile phone platform, called the Nokia 9210, aimed at corporate users.

"The Nokia 9210—the first of the new Nokia Series—[is] distinctively different in design, allowing businesses of all sizes to mobilize their workforce," the company said in a statement. "It combines an attractive and easy-to-use design that approaches individual business users with new underlying technologies that allows IT departments to effectively manage security settings, corporate applications and data.

"It is designed to accommodate users' mobile applications needed in today's business world like mobile email and advanced calendaring," it added.

This is especially important since recent trends point to the likelihood that up to 42 million corporate employees worldwide will spend at least one day a week "telecommuting" by 2000, while almost 100 million will work from home at least one day a month, according to a similar industry study.

Recently, the phone maker brought together a group of young Filipino businessmen and entrepreneurs, to have them try out the Nokia 9210—a phone that resembles the latest models of the highly popular Blackberry device, especially in terms of its keyboard and "pencil" keyboard.

"I was a variety of hats: Restaurant developer, magazine editor, newspaper columnist, TV host," said Bill, not Ed Lederer. "The nature of [these] professions use to be centered [to] mobile. Before [the] technology features, I would be swiftly bogged by downtime if I didn't have constant access to the Internet."

Host designer and author Lilli Marcelo, on the other hand, praised the phone for its mobility. "I'm not a Windows-based application, which [why] her keep up with stock-related market data.

"Also, the availability of Nokia applications which I personally use on the office like [Excel and Word] are essential to us now," Marcelo said. "Future-wise is also a great feature that I plan to use the SDK on number tag-type-thread."

According to Nokia country general manager Fredrick Blanco, new things emerged when the firm began considering the requirements of technology developing the device. "The need for IT departments to have current and manageable platform, and the need for devices to support a variety of employee preferences in different working styles."

Blanco believes the phone is one tool that will help bridge the gap between the perceived and actual uses of mobile technology in the workplace.

"This gap is the assessment of mobile technology's importance in large businesses and whether or not they appreciate the direct and indirect benefits behind the mobility issues, and employees continue to pull them forward," the survey noted.

"The full competitive advantage of employing more advanced mobile technologies continues to be limited by a lack of understanding of the key benefits achievable through the integration of business optimized devices," it added.

Continued strong usage by employees suggests, however, businesses of all sizes are already reaping many of these benefits, and are beginning to recognize the associated cost-benefit of such technologies.

"We understand what mobility means for business," Blanco said. "Our goal is to make it easy for our customers to choose Nokia devices for all their business mobility needs."

For ISPs, the difference lies in service

By Abigail L. Ho

LOCAL INDEPENDENT INTERNET SERVICE providers (ISPs) have admitted to losing the access war with increased telecommunications companies, forcing the small firms to evolve by selling not more and more value-added services.

Pelham Torres, president of ISP Mercom Inc., said independent ISPs had started losing local users' accounts to big companies carrying out such services as products and services that values these would not get with offers non-service providers.

He added that it was no longer access that was driving the business of independent ISPs, but the other services that they offered on top of access to the computer's.

Which was why, Torres said, independent ISPs continued to stay afloat despite the prevalence of dozens-on, high-speed Internet access plans via digital subscriber lines (DSL).

"We still have their as subscribers," he said. "Maybe it's because of the other things that they get from us. Smaller players like us can move quickly roll out value-added services than can big telco counterparts."

Mercom's new week included its VCall service, which made calls with parties abroad even cheaper than or than you would direct dialing IDD calls.

VCall uses voice over Internet protocol (VoIP) technology, which breaks down voice into digital packets that are then sent via the Internet, bypassing the public switched telephone network.

So as low as P750 a month, a VCall subscriber will get a unique US number that can be used to receive calls from friends and loved ones all over the world. An individual abroad need only dial that unique US number to reach a friend in the Philippines.

Differentiating the VCall service from free VoIP services as mainly being offered by Skype and Net2Phone or its Yahoo Messenger with Voice, Torres said VCall offered the convenience of not having to sit in front of a PC, wanting for a call as unless there can even receive calls through their mobile phones.

RP joins Asean roadshow to draw investors

Delegates to update foreign investors on country's gains

By Doris C. Dantao

THE PHILIPPINES IS SET TO JOIN a regional roadshow to be held by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) in Hong Kong and Singapore next month to drum up investor interest in the country's portfolio assets.

Finance Undersecretary Roberto Tan on Friday said that the Hong Kong leg, which shall focus on equity investments, will be held on Sept. 14 and the Singapore leg, which will focus on fixed-income investors, will take place on Sept. 18.

"[The roadshow] will provide assurances on the gross opportunities in the region," Tan said.

CLSA Asia is arranging the roadshows for Asean members, including Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos and Brunei.

Tan said that Finance Secretary Margarito Teves would lead the Philippine delegation that would update investors on the country's macroeconomic gains.

The Singapore roadshow will be conducted ahead of the new International Monetary Fund-World Bank annual meetings, which will be held in town for the first time in nine years.

The last time the IMF-World Bank meeting took place in Asia was in 1997 in Hong Kong, right after the Asian currency crisis erupted.

This year, the Philippines will also chair the group of 24 developing countries, which will meet at the sidelines of the IMF-World Bank meeting in Singapore.

Tan said the G-24's discussions would likely cover the impact of global oil price movements, global imbalances and ending rights in the IMF.

Representation in the IMF is in the form of quota, or contribution to the Fund, and voting rights.

Up for discussion during the September meeting is a new emergency facility being designed by the IMF for emerging markets.

The new instrument was proposed to be made available to member countries with strong macroeconomic policies, sustainable debt and transparent reporting, but which are still facing balance sheet weaknesses.

If proposal scores of up to 200 percent of a country's quota, automatically available to it under upfront disbursal and could still be increased upon subsequent review.

Based on this proposal, the Philippines, through this facility, may have access to up to $6 billion in fresh buffer fund if and when a crisis strikes.

The facility aims to complement bilateral and multilateral currency swap deals under the Chiang Mai initiative among Asian countries.

Aboitiz power unit to bid for Masinloc coal plant

By Abigail L. Ho

ABOITIZ EQUITY VENTURES INC. will participate in the new bidding for the 600-megawatt (MW) Masinloc coal-fired power plant, provided that they are awarded supply contracts for at least 30 percent of the plant's capacity.

AEV executive vice president and chief operating officer Erramon Aboitiz said NO percent, or at least 180 MW of the plant's capacity should base any allocation for the company to consider bidding for it.

"We'll see what the terms are for the Masinloc re-bid," Aboitiz said. "If there are some customers assigned, we may participate. Dispositions must also be for a minimum of 30 percent of the capacity."

The Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) has decided to re-bid the Masinloc plant, following the termination of an asset purchase agreement with the previous winning bidder CBK Power Co.

PSALM president Sixto Ocampo had earlier said that the government facility would again be offered to interested investors through a public bidding.

But the agency needed to privatize the National Power Corp.'s generation and transmission assets before it can go on a concrete schedule for the auction.

"We have to make sure that favorable conditions are in place so we must have enough bidders to ensure that government will get competitive offers," Ocampo said.

"Considering the recent opportunity, investors need to be assured of a market for Masinloc's power output. Aside from power sales contracts, the wholesale electricity spot market, which is now operating, provides a market-driven venue through which generators can sell the electricity they produce."

By the time PSALM places the Masinloc plant on the auction block again, the electricity buyers will have already established a "favorable track record," Ocampo added.

PSALM's asset purchase agreement with CBK was formally terminated last Aug. 6. The group forfeited its $227-million down payment for the plant.

Local shipping firms shift from passengers to cargo

SAILING ARMADAS AND RISING fuel prices are now taking its toll on Philippine shipping lines, which are starting to see fewer passengers boarding their vessels.

The Manila group, which runs the country's biggest shipping company, Aboitiz Transport System Corp. (ATS), has decided to trim its passenger capacity and increase its cargo shipping business.

Aboitiz Equity Ventures Inc. executive vice president and chief operating officer Erramon Aboitiz said ATS would like to avoid or reduce vessels that rely more on passenger load.

"We're still cash flow positive, but the fuel costs are killing us," Aboitiz said.

Still competition from budget airlines since last year has also forced ATS to likewise lower its ticket rates and offer big promotions.

Now, ATS is plans starting a strategy to reduce its passenger load and offer more cargo space instead.

"We got rid of one vessel, leased it abroad, and then we chartered another vessel, [which has more] capacity for cargo," Aboitiz said. "The other vessel has both passenger and cargo. We're going to try this one and see how it goes. It's called Zest."

The new vessel arrived two months ago and will start operations early September.

The Aboitiz's shipping arm, which operates about 15 superferries that offer both passenger and cargo space, used to generate half of its business from passenger load and an equal share from cargo.

"Now, I think cargo load has increased a little bit more," he said.

Increasing the cargo business, Aboitiz explained, was a way to lower costs as a pure freighter would consume half the fuel requirements of a superferry used to transport both passengers and cargo.

Asked whether ATS would add more cargo ships or its fleet, Aboitiz said: "We'll decide, but at the same time we want to sell or reduce our passenger [fleet]."

Also, as part of its cost-saving strategy, ATS has phased out fast ferries, like the Supercat, which were over 30 knots, even to ease its fuel intake.

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Learn the 4 Cs in medical tourism

Clustering, chaining, converging and turning into community

By Eduardo A. Morato
Professor, Asian Institute of Management

CROSS-BORDER HEALTH AND wellness services or medical tourism can be clustered into four distinct domains that are interconnected by the presence of professional medical and therapeutic care.

These four domains include: (1) full hospital care and treatment, (2) specialty clinics (e.g. eye, dental and cosmetic services); (3) wellness surgeries and services; and, (4) retirement and long-term care for the elderly.

The primary motivations for cross-border health seekers are the high medical costs in their home countries, long queuing time, the desire to combine medical services with a vacation and Ayurvedic wellness packages. These packages might include air travel, hotel or resort accommodations, recuperation and rehabilitation programs, site seeing and cross cultural experiences.

According to Michael Porter of Harvard, clusters are "geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers, service providers, firms in related industries, and associated institutions in particular fields that compete but also cooperate." Clusters promote continuous improvement in customer servicing as competitors try to outdo one another. They also upgrade technologies adopted, production systems used, suppliers' quality, and manpower competencies. Sooner or later, clusters cooperate to share common service facilities, professional expertise, labor pools, suppliers for discounted bulk purchases and information base.

There are obvious health and wellness clusters in the Philippines. Its hospitals, three in the concentration of specialized government and private hospitals in East Avenue. This stretches all the way to E. Rodriguez in Quezon City. Here, one can find hospitals geared primarily for heart, kidneys, lung, tuberculosis, children's, and maternity care and treatment as well as some of the best general purpose private hospitals.

South of Metro Manila, another cluster is developing composed of St. Luke's at Fort Bonifacio, Cardinal Santos in San Juan, Medical City in Pasig, Makati Medical Center and Asian Hospital in Muntinlupa. Although more spaced out from one another, they serve the most affluent customers living in the enclaves of Alabang and South Expressway. Specialty eye, dental and cosmetic clinics also thrive robustly in this locational nutrich. In the wellness and therapeutic centers.

Spas likewise abound in many distinct resort clusters. Unfortunately, these health and wellness establishments have not yet embarked on full-scale cooperation and integration programs. Hopefully, the initiative of the Philippine government to promote and develop medical tourism will goad them into more cooperative action. Investors in the retirement and elderly care sectors should position themselves strategically to take advantage of this clustering effect.

Clusters spawn participants in and complete the supply and customer chains of geographically concentrated industries. At the back end of the supply chain are the agriculture, real estate and education sectors. From agriculture, raw vital products emerge. Seed and therapeutic oils and balms. Food for the health and wellness cluster range from the common diet to organic food, medicinal herbs and exotic. Food is brought to the cluster via logistics and distribution intermediaries.

From the real estate sector, there are architectural and engineering firms, project developers and construction companies. Financing and marketing arms, including banks and investment institutions. They build hospitals, clinics, resorts, restaurants, recreation homes, and spas. Finally, from the education and training sector comes the professional health workers which include doctors, nurses, therapists, medical technologists, nutritionists, caregivers, managers, supervisors, cooks, waiters, housekeepers, etc. These industries directly serve the cluster at the middle end of the supply chain. There are the IT-enabled services sector, the suppliers of equipment and materials and the travel and tourism middlemen.

With the health and wellness cluster at center stage, it is linked to the market chain by air and

(CONTINUED ON B2-1)

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Whatever it takes: Keys to unlocking a can-do attitude

A PAINT BUY DISCERNIBLE DIVIDING LINE separates achievers from dreamers, in fine gleam is the first may be difficult to distinguish. You may be tricked into believing that talents, titles, or resources draw the line between the doers and dreamers. However, if you spend a significant length of time with a group of leaders, the first split-

A LEADER'S WAY

John C. Maxwell

ting the achievers from the dreamers would become crystal clear.

What makes the difference? Attitude. Achievers have a can-do attitude that sets them apart from mere dreamers. Achievers are told out to succeed—no matter the obstacles...and they are willing to put forth the effort and pay the price of success.

In my days observing leaders, I have identified four main groups:

Cop-outs

These people set no goals and make no decisions.

Holdouts

These people have beautiful dreams, but they are afraid to respond to challenges because they lack the self-confidence to overcome difficulties.

Dropouts

These individuals clearly define their goals, and, in the beginning, they work hard to make their dreams come true. However, when the going gets tough, they quit.

All-Outs

These are the stars. They want to shine out as an inspiration to others. Once all-outs have set their goals, they never quit. Even when the price gets high and the challenges mount, they're dedicated. Their can-do attitudes carry them to greatness.

Here are 10 keys to cultivating a can-do attitude.

Key 1: Choose your helplessness

Can-do people aggressively pursue solutions, and, in the process, uncover creative solutions others never try to find. Can-do leaders take responsibility for the future, whereas loser leaders blame circumstances or other people when facing roadblocks. Rather than wallowing in helplessness, can-do leaders search diligently to overcome the obstacles in front of them.

Key 2: Take the bull by the horns

Can-do people are leaders. They go straight to the source of their solution. They were often unreasonable attention as they wrestle a problem to the ground with expediency. I have discovered that people with a can-do attitude have an aggressiveness about them. They take the bull

A LEADER'S KEY-1

Because you deserve more for your US Dollars.

Amount of Placement	30 Days	60 Days	90 Days	180 Days	360 Days
$1,000 to less than $10,000	4.00%	4.00%	4.00%	4.00%	4.00%
$10,000 to less than $50,000	4.40%	4.50%	4.60%	4.70%	4.80%
$50,000 and above	4.90%	5.00%	5.10%	5.20%	5.30%

Maybank

Exchange rate: Thermometer or development tool

MAPping THE FUTURE
Mortimer A. Alcasid Jr

WE REMEMBER THE PESO APPRECIAtors in value relative to the dollar. So the government relies on credit and regulations and its monetary policymakers, those of us who have a preference for buying imported goods likewise rejoice. They will be able to buy more items from abroad, including items from the USA and China at lower prices.

But exporters complain that their profits will be wiped out and eventually their foreign markets will be lost. Right after the war, the Philippines was one of the most advanced countries in Asia. I still remember that my uncle's had "installs" (tourists) from Hong Kong taking care of their thrill-chilled.

Our per capita GDP in 1950 and 1960 was higher than that of Korea, Thailand, Taiwan and China. (See table below.)

By 2004 we were way behind Korea, Thailand, Taiwan and China. How this happened, Rep. Angara explains in a very interesting little book "The Peso Exchange Rate: Who we are Post?" Angara is not a professional economist. He is an entrepreneur and a statesman. His objectivity and passion are explained by the fact that at least once, he is both an importer and exporter. At once criticizes economic data to explain how other economists' theories and policy recommendations rapidly by managing their exchange rate.

In his book (81, Angara shows that countries that have undervalued their currencies, like Chi-

	Philippines	Korea	Thailand	Taiwan	China
1950	$253	$82	$148	-	-
1960	$262	$154	$161	$746	-
1985	$643	$1,308	$781	$3,193	$298
2004	$1,171	$10,493	$2,502	$14,943	$1,422

na, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand have performed much better than the Philippines, which has overvalued the peso for decades.

Our political leaders, economists, and the upper and middle classes have a strong peso because:

1. For upper and middle class consumers, a strong peso enables them to buy affordable imported goods at lower prices.

2. For their families and students, lower cost of imported goods enables them to expand their vacation and travel.

3. For businessmen in high-capital and high import content industries, it helps to build businesses and buy raw materials at lower prices.

4. For the very rich who can afford travel, buying foreign real estate, and foreign education a strong peso makes these items affordable.

5. For government officials and bankers a strong peso makes them feel that they have done a good job.

6. To the nationalist in each of us it feels good that our peso can get good value in foreign markets.

But an overvalued peso has its downside:

1. Our small manufacturers face stiff competition from cheap imported products.

2. Exporters have a tough time exporting their products because their costs have risen to have higher foreign currency prices because of the overvalued peso.

3. Our tourist industry has a hard time competing with other destinations because we are not dollar competitive.

4. Farmers are dismayed that imported food sometimes undersell their rice and sugar from other countries can sell at lower prices.

5. The country chronically faces foreign exchange deficits.

Our government's politicians, economists, and central bankers have not failed to address the problems caused by the overvalued peso.

But the measures they have taken have not generated the desired effects. With the exchange rate at P52 to $1 in 1986 by the Gold Trade Act, the peso was definitely undervalued. This resulted in an alarming foreign exchange imbalance.

Instead of devaluing the peso, the government decided to impose foreign exchange controls in December 8, 1949.

Under such controls, exchange was rationed to favored industries and importers. Importers were made to surrender their export proceeds to the Central Bank.

Many people who were able to get foreign exchange allocations gave back. Exporters resorted to underbilling their exports in order to get dollar payments, which they would sell in the black market.

One of the long lasting ill effects of the exchange control scheme is that it fostered entrepreneurial talent from how to market and produce efficiently and efficiently into how to obtain dollar allocations and how to undervalue exports and obtain payments abroad.

Due to the rules we imposed, we corrupted and destroyed a generation of crooked businessmen and government officials.

Devaluation would have been a simpler, faster and better solution.

Realizing that exchange controls alone would not suffice the government devised a program to build import substitution industries.

These new industries had the benefit of dollar allocations and tariff protection.

Unfortunately the preferences given to these new industries in dollars were per rip that did not really have a significant contribution to the economy, and could not survive in a level playing field.

This is the reason why many "luxury parlor" industries were born. They had luxury import dependence, they had very little added value, and their profitability depended on foreign exchange preferences and prohibitive duties and taxes on competing imported products.

Consumers had to buy inferior locally "manufactured" products at a high price or even pay a high price for imported products.

A lot of intelligent economists in government wasted their time making the wrong decisions on what industries to promote and develop.

An endless and often oppressive devaluation of the peso would have provided a level playing field where entrepreneurs and managers could have made better choices on what businesses to get into, build import substitution industries which in the same time starting to develop an export industry.

The Philippines would have been much better off if it did not overvalue the peso and it did not have extremely high tariffs to prop up uneconomic industries.

We could have developed strong import substitution and export industries. Without high tariffs consumer goods would have actually been lower.

Businessmen would make money through local production rather than rampant smuggling. There would have been greater local employment opportunities, and Filipinos would have to go abroad as OFWs.

The folly of our government policies through the last 60 years is very clearly shown by the death of our manufacturing industries as a result to reduction in tariffs.

Due to our failure to create jobs (We have had a mass exodus of talent to work abroad, increasingly because of Filipino sense of family or the fact that they work in countries that their families would not want to live in they remit a lot of dollars back home.

The other sectors of the Philippine economy has been the rapid growth of the outsourcing industry.

As a result the peso has been appreciating in value. Definitely hurting export manufacturing, agriculture, and tourism.

Boy Angara! thanks to that the Philippines has been left behind because we have overvalued the peso.

However, if one also charted the corruption index of countries we have also been left behind. I'm sorry that they have done a much better job at fighting corruption in high levels.

Korea has been very quick in changing and correcting exchange rate barriers and corruption and Fraud. Thailand quickly jailed three election commissioners for fraud in the elections early this year.

Perhaps it's a combination of the overvalued peso and our rising corruption in high places that has constrained our development.

Between 2000 and 2005 the GDP growth of selected countries has been: Philippines 114 percent; Indonesia 163 percent; Thailand 133 percent; Malaysia 131 percent; China 171 percent, and India 149 percent.

Will we ever catch up and regain our position as one of the most developed countries in Asia?

The answer depends on whether we will get political leaders with the political will to change us from a country of rent seekers and importers of imported products to a country of job producers and exporters of products by using the exchange rate as a development weapon not just as a fiscal instrument.

The article reflects the personal opinion of the author. The author is President of Systems Advisors Consult, Inc. Feedback: at mapa@globelines.com.ph

A Leader's Way

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by the terms. When they enter into the arena of action, they don't wait, they initiate.

Key 2: Initiate the no saboteurs.

Can-do people abstain from complaining. They recognize its futility and passed their words and thoughts against it. Complaining this time-wasting activity. As George Washington Carver observed, "History nine percent of failures come from people who have a disease of making excuses."

Key 4: Put on another's pair of shoes.

Can-do people empathize with others. They attempt to see any predicament from the perspective of the other person in order to make the best decisions. In my book Winning with People, one of the 21 People Principles is the Xchange Principle, which says that instead of putting others in their place, we must put ourselves in their place.

Leaders see the world from their perspective and others' perspectives. They have their own perspective to give direction, and they see others' perspectives to forge relational connection. Both direction and connection are indispensable to taking the team on a successful journey.

Key 5: Nurture your passion.

Can-do people are immune to burnout. They love what they do because they've learned how to fuel the fire that keeps them moving. In leadership, the prize is not given to the person who's the smartest, not to the person with the advantages in resources and position, but the prize goes to the person with passion.

Key 6: Walk the second mile.

Can-do people exceed expectations. While others settle for an acceptable solution, they aren't satisfied until they have achieved the unimagined. They are supernatural for themselves higher than what is dictated by the people or situations around them.

Key 7: Quit stewing and start doing.

Can-do people take action. While others are crippled by worry, fear and anxiety, they have the formula to transform anxiety into productivity. Instead of where all is safe and assured you never arrive, so why wait for it? Can-do leaders take risks.

Key 8: Go with the flow.

Can-do people can adjust to change. They don't get caught gripping about circumstances or the past. They accept transitions with an optimistic outlook. They realize it's less important what happens TO them, than it is what happens BY them.

Key 9: Follow through to the end.

Can-do people not only initiate, they finish. They are self-starters with the capacity to close the deal.

Key 10: Expect success as a result of your commitment.

If you make an all-out commitment with a can-do attitude, expect success. Positive expectancy is a magnet, stress, and resources follow creative. Committed leaders will reap rewards and find open doors to others are dream as the endowment and energy necessary to achieve it.

For information on John Maxwell's in-house or public leadership or teamwork workshops, please e-mail us at marvan@pacific.net.ph or call 813-2000/727-32.

MAXWELL ON is ALSO (Smart) to get daily SMS leadership insights from John Maxwell. God bless!

Education crisis to hit RP economy, execs warn

By Dante L. Lucas

THE PHILIPPINE LOCAL EDUCATION system is in a crisis that threatens the long-term stability of the country, business leaders warned.

Three said some of the leading lights of the business community who have banded together to help ensure what they believe is a "downward spiral" in the quality of education in the country.

In a press briefing recently, business leaders warned with alarm recent statistics which showed the steady decline of Philippine education, especially at the primary and secondary levels.

Filipino president Ramon R. del Rosario Jr., and a founding director of the group called Philippine Business for Education (PBEd), explained that the poor quality of education mentioned by many Filipinos will erode the skills and skills of local workers.

This, in turn, will eventually cripple the competitiveness of local businesses in an increasingly globalized and competitive world.

"The quality of the people (graduating from college and entering the workforce) is a major problem," he said. "This is especially important because all our brightest talents are going abroad."

The group presented a compelling case for action, outlining statistics that supported their claims of an education crisis.

According to PBEd, there is an estimated shortage of 62,000 teachers and over million desks and chairs (estimate, mainly in the public education system.

Alarmingly, over 97 percent of high school students failed the latest edition of the National Achievement Test).

PBEd founding director Jose L. Cuisia Jr. pointed out that the share of the education sector as a percentage of the national budget has been declining, even if it has been increasing in absolute peso terms.

Cuisia also pointed out that more and more state colleges and universities are created mainly just with little regard for the quality of education — an ill-conceived policy that leads to inefficiencies and waste.

PBEd officials also noted that "there continues to be a mismatch between the demands of the employment market and the supply of graduates."

Cuisia, a former central bank governor and currently the president and CEO of Philamlife, and the country is even poorly positioned to capitalize on the global boom in the business process outsourcing (BPO) industry, despite low (at) natural advantage with English proficiency.

"The BPO industry will need about 90,000 workers over the next two years," he said. "But the acceptance rate (of applicants) is only (percent)."

To fill this 90,000 employee requirement, BPO firms would have to interview about 4.5 million applicants, given the ten percent acceptance rate.

PBEd founding director and Ateneo University president Oscar S. Saluzar outlined what the business community is planned to do to: Advocate reforms that will make every school successfully perform better; get all teachers to continually improve their teaching practices; adopt a 12-year cycle for formal basic education; continue the enrichment of curriculum development in the context of pillars of non-functional literacy; and to provide leadership for the country-wide attainment of goals.

Other members of the PBEd founding board include Magdalena B. Albaracin Jr., Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala II, Raul G. Bautista, Oscar J. Hilado, Monique V. Jacob, Oscar M. Lopez, Wilmer Wanstong, Placido Mapa Jr., Aurelio M. Montemayor III, Randon S. Navarro, Manuel V. Pangilinan, Washington Z. Sycip, Tony Tan Caktiong and George T. Yang.

Learn the 4 Cs in medical tourism

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hotel transport companies, international health and wellness service syndicators and safety and security enforcers.

Connecting these connectors to the 8 end-customers are information intermediaries (digital, advertising and promotions units) and the all-important health maintenance organizations, insurance companies and social security systems. They bring the global health and wellness cartels to their desired destinations.

The tight interlinking of the cluster with the supply and market chains mentioned — the convergence efforts of public and private institutions all the way from the lush end of the supply chain to the final maneuvers. They are composed of government agencies with specific mandates, industry associations, service networks and the like. For example, at the back end, one will find interventions from the Department of Health, Public Works and Highways, the Commission for Higher Education and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, at the front end, the Department of Foreign Affairs, of Trade and Industry and of Tourism converge to create global customers. At the middle, one would find the most concentrated convergence of both public and private institutions.

Finally, the clustering, chaining and converging phenomenon creates communities of product and service providers who join hands to enhance all the critical requirements of the entire health and wellness universe. "Communitizing" these providers allows for quality standards, volume deliveries and even cost containment since it would be more expensive to avail of their products and services from large corporations and high overhead institutions. At the back end, farmers can be "communities" for the production of organic food. In between, therapists, cooks, nurses, caregivers, taxi operators, and even medical doctors can be "communitized." At the front end, the obvious community is composed of long-term care customers (elderly patients with chronic conditions) and retirees seeking each other's companionship for recreation activities.

A simplified model for Clustering, Chaining, Converging and Communitizing for Cross-Border Health and Wellness Services is shown in the accompanying diagram.

If the Philippine government and industry associations desire to be a major global participant in cross-border health and wellness professional care services, they should be well advised to embrace the clustering, chaining, converging and "communitizing" model. Entrepreneurs will find bountiful and boundless opportunities by identifying obvious gaps or linking various elements of the model together.

CLUSTERING, CHAINING, CONVERGING AND COMMUNITIZING FOR CROSS-BORDER HEALTH AND WELLNESS SERVICES

When will call centers offer video-based services?

By Alexander Villafania
Contributor

ALL CALL CENTERS IN THE Philippines provide either e-mail or voice-based customer service support, but what if the customer could actually see the call center agent?

It may sound like it came straight from a sci-fi novel, but network infrastructure firm Siemtel is expecting that video call center services would be the next leap for the country's booming call center industry.

Siemtel Corp. Vicepresident for Multimedia Applications Betsy Wood told reporters that video is a "killer application" that will give call center operators new business opportunities. Likewise, video call center services can also work on the mobile phone as long as there is an available high-bandwidth 3G cellular network and the phones are 3G-ready.

A communication standard called SIP may soon allow call center agents to interact with clients face-to-face.

Wood said the reason for the possibility of providing video-call center services on even a **mobile environment is a standard called SIP** (session initiation protocol), which allows for interactive communication of voice, data and video on virtually any SIP-ready platform, including computers and mobile phones.

For instance, a customer support agent can provide better service on repairing a computer or related equipment simply by having the customer use a webcam or a video-ready phone to take a video of the device which need repair. This speeds up the process by which an agent can provide assistance to the customer and reduces the time required for the agents to ask questions about the problem.

"If bandwidth is available and if there is a 3G cellular network available, customer support providers would have an easier time figuring out how to help their customers. For the customers, that means less time being on the phone," Wood said.

Although the video call center is one form of service possible using SIP, Wood said service providers could also benefit from video call services, especially for companies that have employees on the field who could conduct video-conferencing with their superiors while on the go.

In particular, financial institutions could provide personalized service to premium depositors. While the personal banker service has been around, Wood said adding video gives more security and adds customer satisfaction.

"All of these are possible and it's only a matter of time before we actually see this happening," Wood said.

Tech gurus discuss. . .

From page B1-1

providers that are heavily pushing their 3G services. Globe Telecom Wireless Group Head for Business Planning Patricia Pineda III said it would be on the mobile space where Filipinos would most likely get their Internet services due to the availability of handsets and the lower cost of devices compared to PCs. He said that mobile carriers' use of GSM/GPRS communication, 3G goes beyond voice calls, SMS and MMS. Instead, it allows for video calls, which **can be the basis for more cyber cafe services.** Likewise, 3G phones can be used for high-speed Internet browsing and e-mail, which were traditional strengths of Internet connected PCs.

"Gusto ito, parang PC ang (I'm) (I want my **cellular phone to be like a PC) it something that** Pineda believes would be a commonly used **customer by Filipinos. "Imagine the Internet** on your mobile phone, access your e-mail, surf the Web, do online services that you would normally do on a PC—and all this is possible with 3G."

The Philippine Long Distance and Telephone Company (PLDT) is one of the biggest communications infrastructure builders and it is on its way to expanding its WiMAX which currently covers some parts of Metro Manila and a few other areas in the Philippines. PLDT Head for Network Planning Arvin Santa said the corporation should be able to open up new services beyond ordinary voice, video and data, which could also be delivered to a wireless environment. Just as cellular fixed or cellular PHS (or PHMG). Because WiMAX expands bandwidth provisioning, the speed by which a particular service is delivered to a user would be greater. He added that deploying and managing WiMAX would be cheaper while giving more revenues to the operator.

The most ideal WiMAX service is expected to be Internet Protocol TV (IPTV) wherein multimedia TV shows and even movies can be viewed and even controlled online. Broadcast company GMA Network Inc. is looking into IPTV. Its Internet arm, Now Media Inc., would be the one leading this endeavor. NOW Technology Consultant Gardner Joe Domingo said that IPTV is already so commercial one in several countries such as the US, most parts of Europe, India, Australia, Japan and South Korea.

On the other hand, Domingo said that for IPTV to be successful, the WiMAX infrastructure **in the Philippines has to be built first to allow** broadcast companies like GMAT and other **content providers to deliver IPTV services.** This is because video is more bandwidth-intensive **than most types of data. Although he did not** specify GMA's specific plans for IPTV, he said **it is an absolute direction for traditional TV.**

Apart from IPTV, a subset called mobile TV is also another service that can explore both 3G and WiFi. TV shows delivered on the Internet can be accessed through a 3G-enabled phone. While the video quality is less than spectacular, it allows subscribers to watch their favorite TV shows anytime and anywhere. Domingo said both IPTV and mobile TV can be new sources of revenues for the telecommunications providers and the content providers.

Although true convergence in the telecommunication and broadcast business in the Philippines is still at least ten years away, hopes are already high that the idea of convergence would push the country forward. The only real challenges would be to get the telecommunications providers to work together and laying the policies that would set everything in motion. Prospects in generating revenues from convergent services are also important, and so are the types of services the low Filipino consumption that would ensure the success of convergence.

INFOTECH
Text us your feedback (type in <name of group> <message> to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart))

Lito Luz Magno

Tech gurus discuss convergence in RP

By Alexander Villafania
Contributor

CELLULAR PHONES AND TELEVISIONS were once two separate services with only a few instances where they could be connected. Soon, these services for both mobility and the Internet will be so facilitated that they would seem to merge as one.

At least that is what the country's technology pundits envisage about convergence and broadcasting in the Philippines.

Hosting the recently held Cyberpress Asia, one of the country's communications experts from the telecommunications services industry gave their opinions on the direction of convergence, what are being done and what else should be laid out to achieve these goals.

Cyberpress is the Philippines' newest coin-OT journalists.

Leading the way to convergence as the Commission on Information and Communications Technology (CICT) and the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC), two government bodies that regulate and set the conditions to secure the interests of utilizing new communications infrastructure, dubbed as "next-generation network" or NGN.

In his keynote speech, CICT Chair Rainier Ilalim specified the use of NGN in a country where cities and towns are not physically connected and have low connectivity for trading. He stressed that NGN, which is the foundation of connectivity for both wired and wireless platforms, can be utilized to deliver new communications services to enable people to communicate and exchange business opportunities not just in the Philippines but also abroad.

Ilalim pointed out that the CICT is already reviewing the country's existing information infrastructure and would create new sets of policies and models to be followed by the country's information technology stakeholders, in particular, the CICT is hoping to implement a voice-over-IP (VOIP) communications infrastructure among other government offices as a model for VOIP deployment for the public. He stated that VOIP can be delivered not just through wired infrastructure but also on wireless platforms, making it a viable tool for remote towns and cities.

Likewise, the NTC has a wider reach among telecommunications stakeholders since it regulates all of the country's communications infrastructure backbone. NTC Chair Ronald Solis said the agency has been constantly conducting public hearings and consultations on the aspects of 3G (third-generation) mobile communications, Internet Protocol version 6 (IPv6), VOIP and wireless broadband Internet, last year, the agency released memorandum governing the infrastructure deployment for VOIP, 3G and broadband wireless access. They have also assigned licenses to some 3G operators, which paved the way for services being tested and eventually deployed by Smart Communications and Globe Telecom.

Globe Telecom is one of the two mobile

Introducing the Intel® Core™2 Duo:
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The Digital Revolution

A fundamental change is happening with entertainment – it's going digital. Traditional photography is a relic of the past, with digital cameras today the norm, movies and music can be recorded and downloaded over broadband internet. There is no denying that the digital revolution is here and now.

Compared to the products in and with looks of yesterday, consumers are now demanding more entertainment in their computers and more demanding entertainment and communications applications or their PCs. One of the reasons for the dramatic phase-out of the processors in the 90's is it is based for consumers to be simultaneously checking emails, chatting on an instant messenger and working on the opening months over the Internet, all while listening to music stored on the computer. At the same time, the computer could be downloading a video to be watched later and running background applications such as virus/anti-spyware and firewalls. This level of multi-tasking requires powerful top end processor power. The PC has grown from a productivity tool into a media, information and entertainment portal. This has led to convergence of the technology from the multi into the living room.

The increasing adoption of such applications has been driven not just purely by the affordability of such technology, but consumers' ability to experience and understand "an their own terms". Consumers are looking for a seamless communication platform for collecting, storing and sharing digital music, movies, photos and more. What they want is convenient and easy access to a wide range of digital content, regardless of the device, service platform and the ability to enjoy it at anytime, anywhere throughout the home when they want to load and relax or even on mobile devices while on the go.

The new range model is set to take off to a new higher level with the launch of Intel's second generation dual core processors, the Intel® Core™2 Duo for consumer desktop PCs. This is a huge leap forward in processors design after using a performance leap not seen since the launch of the original Pentium chip some [illegible] years ago.

The Intel Core 2 Duo processor family consists of five desktop processors tailored for business, home, workstation and enthusiast users, such as high-end gamers, and five processors for the mobile lifestyle. Containing 291 million transistors, these Intel Core 2 Duo desktop processors are designed to provide energy efficient performance, yet can dramatically multiply application beats, enabling users to improve tasks such as creating and playing high-definition video movie smoothly, protecting the PC and its users during e-commerce transactions, and provide longer battery life with slimmer and lighter notebooks.

The new processors provide as much as a 40% increase in performance and are 40 percent more energy efficient versus the best Intel® Pentium® processor. Initial PCs are available today, with more desktop and laptop and implementations designed.

For consumers, the added performance power will mean effortless of the Intel Core 2 Duo processor not only means that they can do even more with their entertainment, it means better power consumption and quieter systems for the home. With the power of dual cores, the processors can manage numerous tasks them. They also can operate more smoothly when multiple applications are running, such as writing emails while downloading music or videos and contributing a video game in the background.

With the Intel Core 2 Duo processor, gamers can also look forward to a new level of realism in dynamic gaming, with no stuttering, crashed or corrupting with other visible quality. The ability to manage high definition graphics smoothly will deliver a whole new level in the gaming experience.

These new Core 2 Duo processors can easily the best processors in the world. Whether in performance power or energy efficiency the new generation of Intel Core 2 Duo processors will give consumers control over everything from all their digital entertainment activities, anywhere, and any way they want it.

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LIFESTYLE

Editor Chuin Bancil Perrenoud

Subsection Editor Liza B. Zaborda

Unique museum charts nation's medical history

ENTRANCE to the Co Tec Tai Medical Museum. For Info Mural on health care by Tiyanak Dagdag.

The Co Tec Tai Medical Museum in Pasay City shows the romance and achievement of the Philippine health and welfare system

By Liza B. Zaborda
Photos by Romy Rondaris

PERHAPS BECAUSE OF their immediacy and drama, the scandal over cheating in the last nursing licensure examinations and the civil-defense challenges such as the Ferrocol slick in Guimaras and the Mayon volcano eruption in Bicol seem to eclipse the Philippines' rather deep and even startling history in social welfare and the medical sciences. This is unfortunate since the nation could look back to a profound legacy in health care and social welfare.

Ahead of the rest of Asia and even of the United States, the Philippines already had the germ of a hospital system in the 16th century because of the charity work of the Spanish missionaries. The present San Lazaro Hospital traces its roots to a hospital initially built east of what used to be Intramuros by the Franciscans in 1578, and the Dominicans opened the San Gabriel Hospital in 1586 for the Chinese parians in Binondo.

But San Juan de Dios remains the oldest existing hospital in the Philippines, having been built in 1596, also by the Franciscans, and still under the stewardship and administration of the Catholic Church, specifically the Archdiocese of Manila, up to the present.

In contrast, the US had its first regular hospital only in 1751, the American physician noted at the turn of the 20th century. "In prevalence for the sick and helpless, Manila at the opening of the 17th century was vie to at close of any city in the English colonies for more than a century and a half to come."

Long history

To better appreciate the Philippines' medical and medical welfare history, one should perhaps tour the Co Tec Tai Medical Museum in Pasay City. The museum is the brainchild of ophthalmologist Willie T. Ong of the Makati Medical Center and Manila Doctors Hospital and his sister, humanitarian and executive Ada Ong Abanto, who most fondly is cited for which is not a leading producer. The museum is housed in two floors of the Textile headquarters on Taft Avenue.

The museum is named after the Ong patriarch (Co Tec Tiong Ong Yong), who came from Xiamen, China to the Philippines in 1910, smuggled messages to the Filipino guerrillas through the Japs for trade and profited during the Japanese Occupation, made his fortune in real estate and cars, and was engaged in philanthropy and social welfare since his retirement. He was 94 years old.

Aside from filled hours, the museum is definitely for young Filipinos who may want to consider a career in the medical and health professions.

"We want young people to come here and perhaps consider taking up a career in the medical and health sciences and practice it in the country," Abanto said. "We really have to do something about the declining number of doctors and nurses in the country."

In order to inspire Filipino aspirants to the medical and health professions as well as wean the brain drain, the museum would like to present role models in the medical and health sciences, Ong said.

Of course, the foremost model should be Dr. Jose Rizal, Ong added. Young Filipinos should be particularly interested to be reminded of Rizal's original writing issues which he used when he was a highly prized ophthalmologist. The issues are on loan to the museum by Dr. Manuel Igsolo.

Extension

The museum was eight years in the making. Ong and Abanto had to root around the

THE CASINO Español de Manila boggles speaks of Philippine lifestyle from another era that remains today.
Far right: Rare concrete jalousie with grille openings reminiscent of maple windows evokes provincial Philippine architecture in 2 ha. sensory image and technology.

Spanish heritage complex in the heart of Manila

WHO SAID CONSTRUCTING A NEW building beside an old one is not good design? Many people believe that the new building must "conform" to the old one by attempting to look alike or at least somewhat similar.

Philippine architects today still follow the outdated "conforming architecture" concept, pairing old and new, designing new buildings that mimic the old by grafting a detail or a feature that echoes a bit of the old building in the new one.

Many times the borrowed heritage detail is farce-fit into the new structure, resulting in an uneasy, out-of-place architecture that awkwardly attempts a blending of old and new.

The truth is that the new always pales in comparison with the old. The original is always better. Imitation is seldom better than the original. So why imitate? Why put the old ill at ease with the new?

In planning its new headquarters on San Luis Street in Manila, Instituto Cervantes decided not to imitate the historic Casino Español de Manila beside it. Instead what it built was a new, totally modern building that relates wonderfully to its heritage neighbor.

The two buildings are totally at ease with each other.

Respected

Among the oldest private clubs in the country, the Casino Español is a respected Manila institution. The club premises, designed in 1913 by architect Jose Ma. Zaragoza, resides in the Neo-"Filipino-Californio-Spanish style," a hybrid architectural style popular during the post-World War II years.

The venerable building, a low single-story structure whose arched loggias spread around a shaded interior courtyard, is one of the last surviving Manila structures from that bygone era.

The membership should be commended for retaining the original character of their club and for resisting "modernization."

Now comes the new Instituto Cervantes, erected on Casino Español property, the new building located on the site of the existing club quadrangle in architecture appropriately of the 21st century, a structure in total contrast with the Zaragoza building as the other side of the shared quadrangle.

Contrasting with the arches of the Casino's loggia, the Instituto presents a rare, heavy, all-glass wall looking out to the quadrangle from behind which a courtyard open-walls connecting class rooms on the ground floor and exposing the library above. Although no details in the new building mimic the old Zaragoza structure beside it, there is full architectural respect between the two structures.

Augusto F. Villalon

PRIDE OF PLACE

The old Casino Español and the new Instituto Cervantes are good neighbors on San Luis Street in Manila

Interiors

The interiors of both buildings mirror the eras when they were built. Beneath the low ceilings of the Casino everything is well-but-subdued wood, polished and tile floors, and in-state-of-antiche-ness chipped from Spain.

Interior Cubicles, architect and Instituto director of the Instituto Cervantes, value the traditional Philippine bahay na bato as his organizing principle for his conceptual design of the new structure.

The lobby evokes the traditional zaguan from a Spanish colonial house in the Philippines. Ground-floor walls are rendered in raw concrete, reminiscent of the stone walls of old, a good extensive rises to the upper floor, where wood makes an appearance on the floors and walls, much like traditional Philippine houses. Evoking capiz windows in old houses, wooden grids frame the glass-doors and windows.

Windows are relatively small and contrast, be it the allocations of spaces and the handling of natural light.

On the ground floor, four separate floor plates with rendered in raw concrete bathed in natural light from a skylight that continue into the second-floor library, whose floor steps down at the perimeter wall to allow more natural light to filter into the enclosed classrooms below.

Light

Light pierces all areas of the building, achieving luminosity and transparency as well as the air circulation as essential conceptual architecture. The building captures Philippine lifestyle and satisfies local climatic conditions perfectly.

Gabriel, who has devoted years studying Philippine architecture, successfully updates historic and traditional references into 21st century architecture, an approach common in other countries but rarely seen in the Philippines.

History and tradition survive on San Luis Street where both buildings stand in neighborly harmony. The low, horizontal lines of both façades form a harmonious dialogue along the street with the two-story Instituto building accentuating rather than dwarfing the low-slung building next door.

Most important, one does not dominate the other. Each building, confident of its exact lines, does not try to outshine the other. There is unity of desire on the street.

Think of a May-December architectural arrangement in this fusion of old and new where each partner enjoys the relationship with strong perspectives rooted in different generations. In the relationship, one is not forced to "conform" to the other nor do the different perspectives clash.

Despite an apparent disparity in form and style, the two partners build a lasting bond that allows each one to maintain his individualism in a shared identity in jointly built up.

May Chesterfield harmony is the lesson to be learned from Instituto Cervantes and the Casino Español who show Manila how to be good neighbors.

Now, does it still hold that you cannot marry your building with an older one?

Heritage match

The new Orbank Savings branch shows us Quiapo's modern face. Its creative, straightforward renovation of an old Spanish building revisited into a contemporary banking area signals the start of a heritage trend in a highly commercial, inner-city neighborhood that usually has little regard for its rich pedigree. Bravo!

E-mail the author at prisk.pisa@gmail.com

MAKES no Orbank Savings for conserving a heritage Binondo building.

LIGHT, air and high ceilings open up spaces at the Instituto Cervantes Library.

Unique museum charts nation's . . .

From page A1

OPERATING room of the San Juan de Dios Hospital in the 19th century.

MEN'S ward of the San Juan de Dios Hospital in the 19th century.

ENTRANCE to the old UST Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy in Intramuros

world to collect photographs and illustrations from various archives and collections. They even attended a six-month crash course on medical history at the University of Wisconsin to gain rudimentary expertise in planning and establishing a medical museum.

The museum divides medical history in the islands into the Spanish period, the American era, the Japanese occupation and the immediate postwar period. The Spanish period in the exhibit is largely devoted to the establishment of medical education in the country in 1871 through the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy of the University of Santo Tomas (the two schools are now separated).

Before the founding of the school, physicians had come from Mexico and Spain, and the pharmaceutical sciences were largely practiced by the Spanish missionary botanists who had studied the curative powers of Philippine flora.

The American period saw new fancy campaigns to promote public health. A photograph shows a float during the Manila Carnival of 1939 with the inscription, "Tuberculosis is a disgrace to the nation. Help it fight it." Ironically today TB is on the rise and remains a leading killer of Filipinos.

Philippine art through the decades also shows the growing public health consciousness. Isang-collection will be particularly impressed at the museum's collection of health and medical related stamps.

A part of the exhibit has been toured around the country and been seen at the Ayala Museum, Dalisay Center of the Philippines, Chinese General Hospital, Department of Health and Novaera.

The museum also has a gallery exhibiting paintings on medical and health topics. On display are works by Thomas Dagdag and other artists. Dagdag's "Brain Drain," was addressed by the museum, is a relevant commentary on the state of the health professions in the country.

It is perhaps because of such a state that Alonso expresses elation that the museum has slowly but steadily attracted visitors, even from the provinces. The satisfied morning student from La Union visited the museum on their Manila field trip. "Were the were," Alonso said, "their professor asked them, 'Ci pare ninyo na isang senalo ng Pilipinas ch-kolehiyan? Anyo nito?" The question remains poignant.

CO TIC TE Medical Museum directors Dr. Willie Ong, Dr. Juan Martin Magsanoc, Wilson Ong, Co Tio Tai (Ong Yong), Tessie Alonso, William Ong and Harold Alonso. Seated: Dr. Anna Lisa Ong, Juanita Ong, Julie Ong Alonso and Hazel Jade Alonso

FIRST batch of nursing graduates, Silliman University

"MAKIN Or Lin," by Ong Ong

PROFESSORS of the UST Faculty of Medicine, circa 1911

JOSE Rizal's sewing knives. Left: surgical weapons at the turn of the century.

The Co Tio Tai Medical Museum is at Santo Internacional Bldg., 2652 Taft Ave., Pasay City. It is open to the public, especially educational tours. Call 831-0000 or 831-0005.

"A THOUSAND Wishes," by Margarita Lim

Sleight of brush with watercolor

By Glen Chevreuxda
Correspondent

THE WORDROUS TOUCH of watercolor has sparked again a revival of eloquence and interesting images in the 23rd Annual Today in Today Watercolor Competition. Some 67 artists—the best and brightest in the medium—took part this year, which had a wide variation from the purely realistic to those who hug the brink of Hall of Famers, the purveyors of nonsistent top prize winners.

Which is not to say those were no boners in a concept as exotic, even as fresh and Chelsi Intal couple adversary of the medium. There were images in this realm of the wise and the wierd, which was perfectly acceptable if those were at least some were spoke applied by their creators that still, certain watercolorists couldn't help but dish out the same old stuff.

The problem with watercolorists to present is they keep repeating themselves year after year such that the same images grow weary of seeing such repetitions. This is not to disparage our many accomplished watercolor masters, but I guess they need at so make an effort to please the mixed in the postmodern era. A dose of salt, a touch of irony, a modicum of farcical comment it all surely goes long ways towards giving this event both eye- and mind-boggling.

I presume this year's panel of judges had a grand time choosing the best of the lot, given the motive of the main staple to a medium so delicate and at once so dramatic as watercolor. A number of new names emerged top winners: Margarita Lim, for her striking symbolist show "A Thousand Wishes"; Mel Calderon, for his genre to the Pinoy neo-simple "Tailendi"; Mel Casuncad, for his visual haiku "Trip to Entity"; and Carlos Pilari, for his black-and-white spectacle "Bubbles."

A honest national, Ilan Young Chool, was one of the few top winners for his "Antique Jars," which should give local artists some tips on how to explain our culture without resorting to the usual "bahay na bato" and camparatos churches.

A number of previous winners had their share of watercolor glory in the they were either too classed in the final reckoning or just couldn't pass muster when pitted against other pieces that were stronger in the conceptual vein. Talent is not the only criterion here, but also clarity of image, depth of message and bravura in the medium, all three evoking in concentric order.

The relentless battle of the previous top winners stirred no love participation, with just three battling it out for the highest honors. I gather the fight was so intense that only two names remained in the last round of discussing: Ben Cortes and Bob Mandang. The former had a penchant of a highway blanked by a huge billboard announcing "Detour ahead" and "Road Under Construction." It is a view infinitely surreal and also profoundly artsy. I am reminded of the depression at the banality of existence in the Fellinians. (See "Divine Destruction." With his mastery of the medium, and his distortion of a world in grave danger, and yet unbothered in its usual gossip, Cortes almost stole the show from everyone.

Cabungco

Another artist who has taken up the subject of a more or less contemporary fetish—stuffed toys and children's games—is EJ Cabungco. In his previous show, he displayed the same stuff but I particularly liked his blowups of monochromatic marbles. A resident artist of Big and Small Art Gallery, Cabungco calls his fourth solo show "Closet Ally" in reference to those hidden nooks that are first displayed and later

"THE DOWNER and Child," by Al Perez

"ROCKY Waterfalls," by Julian Ginger

"STILL Life by the Window," by Marcelo Arcadillo

GRAND winner ball of love competition: "Bubbles," by Tori Cortes

"ANTIQUE Jars," by Ilan Young Chool

"CONTEMPLATED," by EJ Cabungco

"BUBBLES," by Carlos Pilari

"ROCKY Waterfalls," by Julian Ginger

Given her penchants for hyperrealism, these works are truly riveting. I am awed by the artist's painstaking effort at delineating those furry shapes, complete with their expressive countenances and their isolated adherence to yet another of existing regions or creatures that indulge in their own secluded life.

This is a show that reveals a lot about the creator's own foibles and fantasies. Attempts to mimic a universe widened by toys and gadgetry normally need some degree of commentary or personal judgment. But Cabungco prefers to wallow in the stuff of his creation, and hopefully gets carried away by self-induced ecstasies, if childlike view of play cannot prevent from the vantage point of adults.

'Twas frolic!

The art scene is somehow kept alive by the meddling power of curators who have spent considerable time and effort in bringing forward to bear with younger artists. There is a continuing relationship, and this is seen in "Twas Frolic," by 21 established and emerging artists. The duet more style is riotous, in its varying modes of artistic precision, with values representation from a few representations and impressionism.

The names are, of course, familiar to many gallerygoers: Al Perez, Angel Cacnio, Fernando Sena, Ace Mariano, Lucen Bocaten, Tot Buenaventa, Elmer Borlongan and Julian Limpe. Emerging artists include sculptor Bridie Casaic, Mirasbo Amadilla, and Victor Wood (yes, the singer and performer). Rafael Gonzales is based in Bicool while Nanda Miranda has been more/less some time.

In a gathering such as this, the course one takes is the path of least/least, surprises are few.

Perez is, of course, long known for his renderings of the Filipino form, the Mother and Child, as well as old churches, but he occasionally jazzes up his renderings with an innovative touch of brush and paint, not to mention sensitized materials.

Casaic, with his knack for capturing the Filipino family in all its gossipy glory, simply does that with his "Measuring Mag-anak," the subjects finding their most incandescent smiles.

Sena, newbie to many artists, is hyperactive in his exuberant with life. Mariano, on the other hand, combines impressionism and realism and relative to ensure layers in his niche.

Bocaten, long trained by gallerygoers, has been good at capturing rustic color in his canvases. He, too, has Pagmamalo, a doctor who is perhaps better known as artist in two nonfinance painting and sculpture.

The name of Gonzales is identified with aquarelle, while that of Limpe is been associated with fish, or rather fish-like and mermaid-like subjects he has emphasized in countless shows.

Gonzales is best known for his sensory nuances that have been inspired by his milieu.

Casaic, the son, bears some astonishing shows his curator, but he is in search of a style, which explains the quasi-abstract from sky that may one day coalesce into committing more solid and identifiable.

Those artists, at home with their styles, have noticeably found a niche. But it's never too late for artists to rise and, like the mythical IX, throw caution to the wind.

E-mail the author at glen@abs-cbn.com

Visual Arts

Cabungco at Big and Small

Photo-realist painter EJ Cabungco, a graduate of Fine Arts at Philippine Normal U is famously, as lately his surreal works depicting anachronistic stories and stuffed bears in dramatic close-ups. "I have always been challenged to confront reality and trick people's eyes into seeing something else for real," explains his soft-spoken painter. The works show Cabungco's mastery over form to evoke depth of field and realistic color attention to detail. The exhibit runs until Aug. 29 at Big and Small Art Co. (#6, #8 Maginhawa Bldg. N. Mandaluyong City).

"CORRECTA," by EJ Cabungco

BY THE Shoreline

Bonsan at Ayala

On view at Ayala Art Gallery and Gallery Tha Thai Bonsan's "Whisk." The show has been named accordingly—pieces of wearable art. Their motifs: colors of olive thatrounds, spirals, cavities small globes and imperfect squares. The show is rapid in relation to spheres and geometric shapes. Others, mixed in, are monochromatic stones. A light-hearted collection of unconventional utilitarian light containers, each work pays homage to the chastity that makes this area famous (Ma. Antonia Ave. Ayala Art Gallery is at # 15-2000 SE. Ave. corner St., Pasay City. Showing Edmon Amadeus).

'Marie' at Blanc

"Marie," a group show by five young artists, Ben Delmundo, Leonel Pozas, Brando Pinlac and Carlo Santiago, opens Aug. 23 at Blanc Art Space, 32 G main Street, 109 of E. delos Santos St., Salcedo Village, Makati. The exhibit runs until Sept. 13. Call 7255522 or 9189-927 8696.

"LIVING the Periphery," by Ben Delmundo

Villanueva at Mag-Net

Abner Villanueva's "Through Pointlessness" displays his figurative paintings—representations of objects and surrounds signifying subjective decay. Abandoned in one's environment. He works also depict images such as the relentless of a German painting of World War I, showing the pointlessness of war as an overbreeding factor for technological growth. The show runs Aug. 31-Sept. 26 at Mag-Net Gallery Katipunan (305 Ateneo Blvd., Katipunan Ave., Loyola Heights, QC). Call 929 0191.

"VETERANS," by Abner Villanueva

Bancab at CCP

The Cultural Center of the Philippines and Philippine Banking present a solo exhibit by National Artist Benedicto "Bencab" Cabrera in "Bencab on Paper: Prints and Paper Pulp Paintings," curated by Leonardo Oyzon. The exhibit features recent works of Bencab from his collection of the Philippine Sun Print Institute. The exhibit runs until Sept. 5. (6552-3321).

Ruiz, Perez, Bop at Ateneo

Jose Ruiz, Carlos Perez, Jose Tence Ruiz—three figurative painters of different backgrounds—are featured in "Tres Latin." which consists of works from each of the three artists in a palisade form. The show opens Sept. 1, with reception at 7 p.m., and runs until Sept. 14 at Ateneo Art Gallery, 3rd floor, Ateneo de Manila Campus, Katipunan Ave., Loyola Heights, QC. Call 426-6001 loc. 5183.

"DAH-LING, Big Ben are Definitely In," by Jose Tence Ruiz

Oliveros and Tuazon at 7

Jaypee Oliveros and Wise Tuazon are featured in exhibit until Sept. 11 at Gallery 7, 86 Calatagan St., Valenzuela Village, Project 7, QC. Call (0917) 5 or 8736913.

Faith-based art

Bisayan Arts 1 & Bibliotheca presents Che Francisco in "Stations of Faith." Biblically-inspired paintings are featured such as "Two Lots," "The Pain Has Experience," "We Journey," "Book of My Salvation," "Faithful Shepherd," and "Kingdom." The show runs until Sept. 11 at Cebu Bay Bridge Gallery 209, Ali Mall, Araneta Center, QC. Call 9262299 or 0920 9328885.

Aguinaldo, Lelaya at Duemila

"THE SPIRIT of Conquest," by Leonardo Aguinaldo

"ANGEL," by Rani Lelaya

Cacnio lead Maldon exhibit

The Maldon children's group Mga Pinoksiyon ng Maldon is opening an art exhibit, "Sining (ning) Pasaloo: Struggle on Maldon, Our Time," Aug. 27-Sept. 3, at the Precautions Restaurant in Maldon, Cebu. Leading the exhibit is renowned farmer-sculptor Angel Cacnio, Proceeds of the exhibit will finance cultural projects. Call 0920 9736619.

"BULUNGAN," by Angel Cacnio

Pilar Tuazon at Casa Arroza

The works of Spanish photographer Pilar Tuazon are featured on the exhibit "Recuerdos de Espana" at Casa Arroza, Concordia St., Makati. The photographer focuses her keen attention to those moments in those countries. Call 7254308 or 7307484.

"WINDMILLS of La Mancha," by Tuazon

Marian exhibit opens this week at Santo Domingo

MOST MARIAN FEAST days in the Philippines are celebrated in special ways with fiesta, novena masses, processions. Outdoor parades, floral offerings in May and pilgrimages to centuries-old Marian shrines. The most popular appointments of devotion to the Mother of God in the country are the feasts and novenas honoring Our Lady of Perpetual Help every Wednesday in Baclaran, Our Lady of Manaoag in Pangasinan, Our Lady of Good Voyage in Antipolo, Our Lady of Peñafrancia in Naga, Our Lady of Peace in Tagaytay, and Our Lady of La Naval in Quezon City to name just a few.

Although many Catholics present genuine devotion to the Blessed Virgin, which finds expression in different ways they are imbued with their color and folk culture, not to mention those bordering on superstition and fanaticism, the particular devotion to the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary or the Birthday Mary is quite uncommon in the Philippines. In the metropolis, only one church in Marikina is dedicated to her Nativity. Her other church is celebrating her birth since she is found in Bengal, Laguna, and famous.

The earliest document mentioning the feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God comes from the 6th century. St. Romanus, the great ecclesiastical lyricist of the Greek church, composed a hymn for the feast which was a poetical sketch of an apocryphal gospel of St. James.

The earliest mention of the devotion to the Child Mary may be traced to Milan, Italy, in 1000, the year in which the church of Santa Maria Pedicorte was dedicated to the Mystery of the Nativity of Mary. Eventually, the church became the Cathedral Church of Milan. In 1251, Pope Innocent IV granted in perpetuity a plenary indulgence for those who visit the cathedral on Sept. 8. From then on, Mary's birthday was celebrated with great solemnity.

The present Cathedral was consecrated in 1573 by St. Charles Borromeo who dedicated it officially in honor of Mary's Nativity. Over the main entrance of the church are these words in bronze letters: "Maiae Nascenti." The tomb of the saint is found to the right of the church.

An art exhibit, "La Virgencita," will be held Sept. 3-15 at Museo de Sta. Domingo in Sta. Domingo Church, Quezon City, to commemorate and promote the devotion to the Lady's Nativity.

The Rosary Dominican group of the Dominican seminary, Espiritu Di Kristo ang Pasasalamatan

BAMBINA Maria in solid ivory courtesy of Gino Marasigan

DULCE Nombre de María, from the collection of Nenita

BASE Ivory image of San Joaquin y La Niña María courtesy of Noel Adajadan

NENA Maria courtesy of a devotee from Pampanga

MD Nicolas, curator and exhibit designer

MD. ROLLO Mikhail Gomez, OP, head of Kapnid

Also featured in the exhibit are the ivory images of San Joaquin y La Niña María, and Antonia Cayetano, both in Mexican Nelle Costumbrismo. Other images on exhibit include those coming from the collections of Delia Carreon Reyes, Tata Arrieta, Dr. Joel Pastrana, Betty Dungcaliran, Nenet de Leon, Jun Mendoza, Yoyo Muñoz, Lt. Jojo Ildefonso, Nino Calderon, and Philip Escudero.

The first two pioneering exhibits mounted by Nicolas on the same Marian theme were held at the convent of the Infocon Province Church in Manila in 2004 and 2005.

Former University of Santo Tomas rector and Commission on Higher Education chief Fr. Rolando V. de la Rosa, OP, presided by the consecration of the revered image of Our Lady of the Rosary, La Naval de Manila, Dulce Nombre de María and La Virgencita.

Oops! Better safe than sorry.
Before you think of using or buying that "Detox" machine for you and your family, clinic, or business, consider the following:
- Is the unit scientifically designed to create a bio-energy field precisely coherent with the bio-field of the human body? Or is it only haphazardly producing a magnetic field by putting electricity in water?
- Does it work on a cellular DNA level to rebalance the energy forces within the body, restore proper equilibrium and regain level of mental, physical, and emotional health? Or will it disrupt the body's vibration and proper functioning of the immune, hormonal, nervous, and circulatory systems?
- Can the system remove toxic waste and cellular debris from the body, passing them in water, in just half an hour? Are there clinical proofs and credible testimonials supporting such claims?
- Can the different colors appearing in the water be attributed to toxins taken out from the various body organs? Aren't they more the result of the interaction of the energy, particularly of the metal used, the impurities of the water, and the complex body mass of the body using the system?
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LIFESTYLE

PARLES Ramgat as his new jacket Carol in Tanghalang Pilipino's "Orfeo sa Impiyerno"

Women on the verge

STORY ON PAGE D4

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TULDOK BY PAPUANG TIGTUMPILAPILANG

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CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

4	2			5			3	9
	3							
	8		2		1	5		7
			8			1		4
			1		9			
8		7			6			
9		6	3		2		7	
							8	
1	7			9			2	6

Difficulty Level ★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 TO 9.
Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

2	9	5	6	8	3	7	1	4
4	1	3	2	7	5	9	6	8
6	8	7	9	4	1	2	5	3
5	2	4	7	3	9	6	8	1
9	3	8	6	1	2	4	7	5
7	6	1	4	5	8	3	9	2
3	4	6	5	2	7	1	3	9
1	7	9	3	8	4	5	2	6
8	5	2	1	9	6	8	4	7

Manila Int'l Book Fair 2006 opens Aug. 30

PUBLISHERS AND BOOKSELLERS WILL hold the 27th Manila International Book Fair (MIBF), the country's paramount event for the book business, at the World Trade Center Metro Manila's Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue and Roxas Boulevard, on Aug. 30-Sept. 3.

With the theme "Make it a Habit," the MIBF aims again unites local and foreign publishers, wholesalers, retailers, book lovers and collectors, librarians, authors, publishers' representatives, and many major players in the publishing industry in its continuing efforts to promote books and reading.

Annually it's more than 50,000 people for local, the MIBF showcases the largest and most varied collection of literature, textbooks, educational supplements, general reference, religious and inspirational titles, self-help books, management books, Filipiniana, coffee-table books, popular novels, children's books, art books, graphic novels, rare and hard-to-find titles, magazines, audio and e-books, multimedia, teaching supplies and services, publishers' technology, and travel materials.

The 27th Manila International Book Fair is organized by Primewaste Asia Inc. in partnership with Asian Catholic Publishers Inc., Book Development Association of the Philippines, Philippine Booksellers Association Inc., and Philippine Independent Publishers Association.

Media partners include ABS-CBN, Studio 23, ANC, 99FM and 105FM. It is sponsored by the Departments of Tourism, Education, Trade and Industry, and Science and Technology.

Also participating in the fair are the Philippine Educational Publishers Association, Book Exporters Association of the Philippines, and the Christian Booksellers Association Philippine Chapter.

Fair hours are from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. on weekdays, and 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. on weekends and holidays. Admission is P50 per person.

For more information, call 833-3129, 833-3130 or 833-3131, or e-mail mibf@primewaste.com.

New Day books

Leading religious and Filipiniana publishing house New Day Publishers will launch its latest books and collector titles at discounted prices during the 27th Manila International Book Fair.

Topping this year's new titles are "Pest Ilonca in the Philippines: A Social History of the Filipino People," by Luis Carmen Dery, a social history of the Philippines from 1571 to 1898, and "Read and Rewrite Tradicion: A Primer of Nationalist Literacy," by Fidel V. Tadena III, a collection of essays on Filipino history, governance, education and culture.

New Day will also offer insightful self-help books on practical topics such as John Burns's "Survival Tips for Students," Liz Sabino "The Thing About Calories," "The Thing About Stress," and "The Thing About Being Offline."

For married couples, there is "365 Ways to Make the Most of Your Marriage" by Juliet Jurwitz and Lucy Ashrick.

For students, New Day has released "Dictionary of Latin Legal Terms and Other Foreign Terminologies" by Dr. Tomas Andres, "On the Genealogies and Geographies of Philosophical and Theological Thinking" by Paul Sheehan, and "Understanding Psychiatric Nursing Practice: Psychodynamics Approach" by Estella Garcia.

Meanwhile, Elizabeth Ong's "Equipments, Potentials & Pot & Whale" is a book subtitled "Old common mistakes Filipinos make in the English language.

Finally, there is "Syrian Secret"—a 672-page compilation of pieces of the late American crime historian William Worst Scott, edited by New Day executive director Serafin R. Ui-Kanchi.

Also offered are comic books, inspirational materials, devotional and other family-oriented reading at especially discounted prices.

New Day Publishers is at Booth 205-206, Aisle 8. Call 9268616 or 9279362 or e-mail newdaypublishers@mozcom.ph for details.

Bienvenido Lumbera: 'Even without a nation, Filipino artists must be nationalists'

Should National Artists be nationalists?

By Arnaldo Ma. Guerrero
Contributor

THE NATIONAL ARTIST AWARD IS 34 years old this year, with 58 artists to date in the exalted lineup. As society thrives, these awards have been strained by controversies. Were artists, deserved or otherwise, have been made due to procedural paragraphs.

What is the rationale for the National Artist Award, asks Bienvenido Lumbera, himself a National Artist awardee this year (for literature).

Lumbera—literary historian, critic, poet and playwright—spoke during the recent opening of "Lapping Himbing" (The National Artist Lectures), sponsored by Ateneo de Manila's and the Department of English, Literature & Manila Literature.

He called attention to the fact that the Award is now a Cultural Order known as the Order of National Artists "fourth in precedence among the orders and decorations that comprise the Honors of the Philippines, and equal in rank to the Order National Scientists and National Living Treasures Award" (Executive Order No. 236, Sept. 19, 1995).

Among the "Criteria for Selection" as specified by the Order is having manifested in "building a Filipino sense of nationhood."

The panel hammered on this theme: "nation," and "a sense of nationhood."

There centuries under Spain and half a century under the United Forces had rendered the Filipinos with hardly a cultural heritage that they could claim as authentic, call their own," Lumbera observed.

Under the educational system, as far as arts and culture were concerned, and religion was "unscientific," while the books expounded on art as this was practiced by Western artists. As a result of the colonial mind-set, the instinct (and, the validation and originality of specific Filipino works did not matter.

The situation, however, has changed for the better, somewhat. Today, awareness of the need to define some native to Filipino cultural product has begun to seep into the consciousness of the Philippine academe. Such awareness heralds a brighter future for Philippine art as a distinct product of a people with its own historical and culture."

Then, the rationale for the National Artist Award is clear: "The Filipino people need to be reminded at every turn of their moral life that we are in the grip of a struggle (for nationhood and national identity) that we cannot break away from. We are a people without a nation, a people in constant risk of losing our identity."

Lumbera concluded: "The National Artist Award (and this) even without a nation, Filipino artists must be nationalists, artists whose triumphs are landmarks to mend the renewed achievements of a genuine sense of Filipino nationhood."

The "Lapping Himbing" lectures results in September at the Ateneo University Escaler Hall, with National Artist for Theater Salvador Bernal as guest speaker.

Book of journeys by Alice Villadolid

JUST OFF TO THE PRESS IS "JOURNEYS for the Spirit," a travel book by veteran journalist Alice Colet Villadolid.

Described in the book are visits to the Cordillera mountain provinces on assignment for the New York Times when Villadolid was Philippine correspondent in the 1970s. Also included are her writings when she was commissioner for cultural dissemination of the the National Commission for Culture and the Arts in the late 1990s.

Profiles of Dominican saints and their relevance today are presented by Colet Villadolid from her readings and experiences as a student of the University of Santo Tomas, where she earned her A.B., summa cum laude, and later, M.A. in Communication.

Also described and illustrated with pictures are churches and monasteries in Italy visited by the author in the 1990s when her husband then was Philippine ambassador to the Holy See and to the Order of Malta.

The opening chapter is about the elegant St. Michael's church in Hohenfels, Germany, where the author visited her daughter Anna, who was then a cultural volunteer at the Munich Re Company. It is linked to the story of the San Miguel Pro Cathedral in Manila as described by National Artist Nick Joaquin.

The foreword of "Journeys for the Spirit" was written by Dr. Ernesto L. Garcia, chair of the National Book Development Board.

Arts fest features ballet concert

FOR THE SECOND SESSION OF THE MCCI Arts Festival 2006, "Sarsuela Philippines!" the Manila Chamber Orchestra Foundation and Equitable PCI Bank present a ballet concert featuring the works of Filipino choreographers Jojo Lucila, Myra Beltran, Jaime Corsiano, Stephen Hosaka, Joe Inagando and Annie Umerez.

To perform the dance works are dancers of the Stella C. Damian School of Ballet Inc. and Ballet Concerto Company, with guest artists from the Chameleon Dance Company and Ben Nuestas.

The show is on Sept. 3, 4 p.m. at the Francisco Santiago Hall, Mezzanine, Equitable PCI Bank, Tower I, Makati Ave. and H.V. dela Costa St., Makati City. Call 8186300 and 8186000 local 1606, or e-mail mcciconcert@mcci.net.

Philippine book bags award in Bangkok

UNDERSCORING EXCELLENT IN PHILippine printmaking in printing, a book by visual artist Gaye Despitos was recently conferred a first to Print award in Bangkok, Thailand, by HP India, a line of printers, by Dresden Packard that caters to professional printing houses.

Competing over other entries from Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and other Asian countries, the work by established artist Despitos, who trained in Fine Arts at UST, was described by Prachtatarasa as an expert in lithography, offset and visual graphics through computer imaging. It was one of two winning entries chosen by judges. The book, produced by Digital Rot, a division of commercial house GA Printing, was printed by a 60-plate work. Unlike other books, only five copies of the volume were produced by the Makati-based company.

The book print run of five copies marks a revolutionary departure from traditional printing, says Chevie Pelaez-Salazar, president of GA Printing, which specializes in brochures, annual reports, menus, manuals, and other material that require high standards of craftsmanship. She explains the Digital Rot was set up to specialize in this new technology developed by HP Indigo which has made possible the speedy delivery of high-quality work at reduced costs.

While desktop laser printers with camera attempt to provide the same benefit, they are limited in their capacity to reproduce all the hues and specific visual values. Digital Rot uses HP technology combines the flexibility of digital printing with offset quality. The result: are marks that of offset ink," says Salazar. "Your printers can't tell the difference between what's been printed on our HP Indigo digital offset press and what's been printed on a traditional offset press."

Despitos's book is a collection of poems by Filipino poets, including Jose Garcia Villa, Nick Joaquin, Francisco Arcellana, Edith Tiempo, Alfrredo Salazar, Rolando Tinio, Cirilo Bautista, Ricaredo Demetillo, Virgilio Almario, Rio Alma, Ricardo Lee, Ophelia Dimalanta, Ramon Sunico, Ricardo de Ungria, Ricardo Maramag, Jr.,

BART Guingona, Steve Fredalusan and Michael Williams in director's director's "Dinah and the Maiden," directed by Guingona

Women on the verge

By Gibbs Cadiz

IT'S BEEN RAINING WOMEN in local theater these past months—and hallelujah to that.

After the rosy, starry glitz of the musical revue "Were Still Here" led by Pinky Marquez, and Cherie Gil's mellifluous turn in Atlantis Productions' "Lysistrata" at the SCBC Theater, there more extraordinary female characters have recently rushed their encounters on Manila's stages: Maria Calica, embodied with fierce energy by Ely Buendia and the Philippine Dance Company's production of Terrence McNally's "Master Class," Stephanie Bonifacio, the vengeful unpublished guitarist played by Bituin Escalante in Antoni's director-he's "Death and the Maiden," and Lady Macbeth, Regina Torralba, in the tragic heroine of Bienvenido Williams' "Orpheus Descending," to be reviewed on the Tanghalang Pilipino stage by Maximilian Dimabayao Rivera soon.

"Orpheus" is one of the playwright's lesser-known works, but in Bonifacio and Lopez it is quintessentially Williams—an impassioned examination of lost traditions, creative fury and a society that can be subdued to itself—not divine, passion, independent thought, life itself.

As with Blanche DuBois in "A Streetcar Named Desire," Serafina Delle Rose in "The Rose Tattoo" or Karen Stone in "Suddenly" saved "The Rotten Spring of Mrs. Stone," "Orpheus" heroine, Lady Torralba, is no saint—a stubborn, manipulative, tainted but not necessarily knowing woman who is an outcast in the circles she moves in, "different" in various ways from the herd, and so becomes the object of ridicule and bewildering from peers and neighbors.

Eternal outsider

In TPI's "Orfeo ni Isagkurus," Lady Torralba had become Reyna Torralba, a middle-aged woman trapped in a loveless marriage to a lying bisexual gigolo (Alonte Dilbas, worthless). Reyna, with her formal Visayan accent, is an eternal outsider looking in on the dreamy, feverishly loud, upper Tagalog town that now—struck in days choking about her impending widowhood.

PHIL Ryan Enos and Bituin Escalante as Stanislaus Kowalski and Stella Kowalski in a tragic version of Tanghalang Pilipino's "Orfeo ni Isagkurus," directed by Jose Estrella and adapted by Gino-gin Jocson from Tennessee Williams' "Orpheus Descending."

Into this hell comes her Orpheus in the form of Val (Phil Ryan Enos), a virile, wandering guitar player who applies his work in bar rings. Soon, he becomes more than just a hired help, until their love-bubble descends into tragedy as Reyna turns violent. Williams presented against the oppression of the world he fled as a gay.

Jose, emoting premiere here, played his role a bit more blunter than necessary. Of the five supporting cast, two were exceptional: Madeleine Lazaga as the sensitive town beauty Carol, and Perrine Offman as the party-addled wife of the lazy Jack Villanueva would have loved this role).

George de Jesus' emoting adaptation transposed the opulent American South to the violent heated milieu of General Luna in the 1960s, with outlooks and flats fulling actors holding weapons over the proscenium.

In its suffocating feel and tone, helped by a delicious pitch ambivalent between gothic and melancholic, the "Orfeo" reminisced reminiscent the same dank, overheated small-town atmosphere in Lino Brocka's "Bayaning Sa Ngayal Bakong." That underlying emotion could be irresistible under Jose Gonzalez's generous direction, which natural poignant under those Williams' lines so and living.

At the center of that storm was Bienvenido, who was phenomenal.

In this roughly 60-min. her performance that, in a theater scene where she was trying to prevent Val from leaving by taking possession of his precious guitar, Bienvenido's rage, proud last suddenly dissolved into a small giggle, as she realized the absurd lengths her newfound passion had taken her. It was a fleeting but telling gesture, the kind that implied this woman had reached the white-hot, cathartic center of her character's heart.

Greatest practitioner

Outside feelings were also the norm in Philippine Opera Company's "Master Class," directed by Michael Williams. The subject, after all, was opera—accented, distorted and muffled by no less than its greatest practitioner: Maria Callas, La Divina herself.

In Terrence McNally's Tony-recognized meditation on the delusional paradoxes of life, love and art, Callas' instructions with twenty-years singers (based on actual master classes she conducted in New York in 1971) provides a window into the full flower of her genius, how she used her life experiences, from her drudgery childhood in Greece to her unhappy years with Aristotle Onassis, to inform and elevate her craft.

Ellen in "Master Class" is a powerhouse role, and Ely Buendia stepped up to the plate magnificently. Like Bienvenido she acted huge, quite outsize, this actress didn't seem like in the normal heart. Her features she projected, the majestic nose of entitlement—all were clearly the result of someone pulling herself up by sheer will-power and talent. Brave to make a messy confession, terrible, embarrassing, and finally moving performance.

Ana Feleo, Keith Gutierrez and Louise Javier were commendable in supporting parts. It was the tenor John Glen Sandico who let [illegible] a good-ish "Recondita Armonia" from "Tosca," which in the hot reached Callas enough to make her cry under this show-backs outer-eyed, too.

Political melodrama

Williams the director of "Master Class" gave way a few moments later to Williams the actor, this time as the third-related in Ariel Dorfman's political challenges "Death and the Maiden," under co-star Bart Guingona's direction.

They were joined by Bituin Escalante, the multi-faceted musical theater actress who was making her straight-play debut in the Atil production at the RCBC Theater.

Escalante is nowhere near middle age, and her character, Paulina Escobar, could conceivably be only in her late 30s. But Paulina's difficult past in the hands of the former military regime has aged her and, quite possibly, driven her off the deep end.

So when a stranger she believes is her past torturer comes to her home, she assaults him, ties him to a chair, and proceeds to put him on trial, with her husband, Lawyer Gerardo Escobar (Guingona), serving as counsel. The lawyer sets up business the soapbox from which Dorfman asks hard questions about retribution and forgiveness, truth and justice ("People can die from an overactive dose of the truth" to quote our sympathetic, the core of the political on the personal.

Radical, Dorfman can be most of fictions, was a physically aloof part for Escalante. But married, Lyon Kim energy and age has already been compacted, and her mobile features seemed to exhibit the inner spiral in the actor's timeless.

It's painful to report, therefore, that Escalante was out of her depth of the text endlessly absorbing play. She was effective in moments, and had the requisite audience sweet-down pat—the unsure-realized doubting, the crumpled look the quivering voice, the insistence who's there at the bar level with her this. It was a classic student-encounter, self-conscious and superficial, in its deepest level of its [illegible] mark.

Bienvenido was, in actual, intense—forceful even as paranoia. Bart Williams, as Dr. Roberto Miranda the alleged torturer, could do quite a job.

Gene Hackman first played this role on Broadway, then Ben Kingsley in Roman Polanski's film version (which went the tepid way by discarding the play's acting ambiguity). There's reason these actors were chosen for the part. They male, even in villainy, a potent sense of arrogance, a richness of malevolence that keeps the air around them charged with dangerously tension.

Williams' sympathetic doesn't. Dr. Miranda himself is no such undercover. Perhaps it was the production's point—that evil could reside in even the most humble and outwardly looking of individuals. The lack of another emotion, however, closes the play's sense of tension off key. Every time this Dr. Miranda protested his innocence, we were more than ready to believe him. There was Graduate's heroic stronger in outrage.

Despite its high-minded themes, "Death and the Maiden" is constructed like a Gothic-Gothic thriller. This staging played more like a literate, earnest clash of ideas, as a political melodrama, it got the politics right, but fell short of the drama.

E-mail the author at gcadiz@inquirer.com.ph

THE CAST of Philippine Opera Company's "Master Class," staged by Michael Williams (second from right). Ely Buendia (center, seated) played Maria Callas.

BART Guingona, Steve Fredalusan and Michael Williams in director's director's "Dinah and the Maiden," directed by Guingona

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Editor Emerie G. Velarde

ENTERTAINMENT

'Grey's Anatomy' is Emmy favorite

LOS ANGELES—ABC's hit medical drama "Grey's Anatomy" is favored to win the top award at Sunday's (this morning in Manila) Emmy Awards and fell a bid by newly departed NBC political saga "The West Wing" for a record fifth team as US television's best drama series.

TV pundits say first-time nominee "Grey's Anatomy" – starring all-in-bed/sexual/romance – is one of prime time's most wedded shows, disclosure a strong challenge from Fox's cop thriller "24," supernatural fantasy contender.

Two other nominees are considered long shots in this year's Emmy drama race—Fox's hospital show "House" and ABC's gangster hit and past Emmy winner, "The Sopranos."

In the contest for best Comedy Series, the heavy favorite is NBC's workplace satire "The Office," adapted from a British series of the same name. It's the Steve Carell, is the one, creator pick to lose remarks since he his role as Dunder Mifflin boss.

The main threat for a return comes from sentimental odds series, Fresh Icons of the US firefighting drama "Rescue Me" and Ken Jeong's from TBS's sly show "The Closet," an area at American

GREY'S, E2

INSIDE

- Patrice Pike gets Supernova boot E/2
- RP 'Idol' picks 24 semi-finalists E/4

'Idol' satire takes full advantage of its material

'AMERICAN IDOL' IS A POP-cultural phenomenon just waiting to be spoofed. The show is much more than the most popular program on American television, it's a symbol of the depth and shallowness of the most non-universal longing for stardom, especially in this age of celebrity worship.

It's the Cinderella story given a video romp, with a microphone filling in for the stubby mate's princess slipper, and Simon Cowell cutting on strong and stinky as the new Prince Charming.

What makes 'American Idol' such a hit with viewers? It gives them a visceral thrill to see utter unknowns like themselves become instant stars, only a few months from home. It's those viewers themselves who make that moment miracle happen with their vote-votes.

That fulfills them with a feeling of power that they don't have in their own lives, and it sure does outre their overarching sense of impotence and frustration.

Then, 'American Idol' has become more than it ever helped to be, in both its positive and freaky manifestations. Its propensity for freakiness is what has given the show its campy character, and camp answers not just cling but devotees but outstays as well.

So far, it takes three to 'about' laughs, laughs and depths, all the way past the

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

three-hour wrap up to full view of billions of television, courtesy of a bomb snapped to a finalist's chest.

It's the height of freakiness, but it works, writer-director Paul Weiland and his actors play the for-sure premise for real.

Hugh Grant is a big star, but many of his previously heavily scandal-ridden. At a crusty Cowell show in this movie, however, he comes into his own as a satirical therapist imbued with perfect size.

Mandy Moore sunshine heroine lightweight one, also benefits from her involvement in this film. She plays a finalist who's all earnestness and light on the outside, but is so cynical and "sure friendly" as Grant's character is for many hours of hours.

Newcomer Sam Rockwell provides the sensitive finalist Gates with a compelling combination of determination and naïveté. Other superior portrayals are turned in by Dennis Quaid as the US president, William Fichtner as his head of staff and excitable puppeteer, and Chris Klein as Moore's pasty of a boyfriend.

Every sentence-to-do-acting work here, especially Shohreh Aghdashloo (3 in Grant's snarky aunt, and Tony Yalda as his ambitious but sensual sexual-cousin.

Beyond the fine performances, however, it's this film's theme that gets top marks from delighted viewers. Sure, it's farcical and outlandish, but it does say a lot about the overarching dreams and self-serving attitudes that permeate the contemporary pop[ular] culture today.

It's a cautionary reminder that the instant idol has feet of clay and that cynical Oreants have a nasty way of turning into—Nightmares!

'Cardinal Sin Day'

FROM 7 to 11:30 a.m. on Sept. 2, "Cardinal Sin Day" will be celebrated at Cardinal Sin Gym, Pamu, Sta. Ana, Pam, Manila. There will be a morning Mass and animal blessing. Companion and responsibility for animals (Cats) will give free rabies vaccination for all dogs and cats.

At the CCP

THE DIRECTOR of the Cultural Center of the Philippines from Aug. 31 to Sept. 28, "Sinaupan," featuring works by Cathy Danes at the Small Gallery, from Aug. 31 to Sept. 30 at the Bench Area Gallery. "Dekonstruksi," by Rolando Arrieta. Call 832-3702.

Why Binoe wants to do more indies

Text and photo by Mel Valera

"I WAITED A LONG TIME for this award. Finally, I got it," Robin Padilla told Inquirer Entertainment on Friday about bagging this year's Gawad Urian for Best Actor in director Mark Meily's "La Vina Loca," produced by United Films.

"I'm thankful to God and to all the people who still trust in me," he added, speaking in Filipino. "It's like all the good things I've done have been rewarded. Maybe, I have not been selfish, as the blessings don't stop coming."

More satisfaction

Robin, 36, said he feels more satisfaction working in independent films like "La Vina Loca" rather than in mainstream, commercial movies.

In "La Vina," Robin is Jun Hamon, whose obsession with getting a US visa reflects every Filipino's American dream. It was a part made for him, said Robin.

"I told the producer [Tony Gloria] I could play that part very well," he related. "For five years I'd been trying to get a visa to any country with no success. I knew I could give justice to the role because I had undergone all the hardships and heartbreaks of the character in the movie."

Robin's conviction for illegal possession of firearms in 1994 had apparently erased all his visa problems. Until now, Robin has not been able to obtain a Canadian visa even. It he already holds US and Australian visas.

The actor, who was identified with "kid fop" roles in the '90s, admitted that he still preferred action to romantic roles.

Just the kissing

"The only thing good about romantic movies are the kissing scenes," he joked.

Doing indie movies like "La Vina Loca" and "Bladeon," also produced by United, is his way of contributing to what he called a revolution in local movies.

"I shouldn't let my career revolve around commercials," said Robin. "Let's give that to the kids. You can call me Ms Gloria. I volunteer to make films for him that major studios won't do. How would we know what films would click in the international market if we don't try them first?"

Robin had to let go of his paycheck in "Bladeon."

"I was given only an allowance to pay for my security men during shootings," he said. "In 'La Vina Loca,' I was given a small salary. Until now, the producers have not recouped their investment in that movie."

Shaneen Cinema was one of the investors in the movie.

Foundation

"Till I Met You," Robin's movie for GMA Films, is about making a living and being able to sustain his foundation, Liwanag ng Kinabuhayan, through which he built orphanages for disaster-victims.

"I don't accept anything from anybody. From one politician," said Robin about the foundation's financing. "If I did, there would no longer be sincerity in helping others."

Breaking through

Robin also sees indie movies as his way of breaking through the international market.

"Among Asians, Filipinos have all the advantages," he said. "We can speak English and we know how to act. English is a problem to most Asians."

In "Blackout," Robin plays a dark character whose mind has been ruined by poverty and desperation. To get into the role, Robin stayed on the set—a row of decaying apartments in Cubao. The movie would first take the international film festivals before opening here early next year.

"What I really want to do next is an action movie, an indie action movie," said Robin. "I'd like it to be a Pinoy version of Quentin Tarantino's films."

ROBIN PADILLA

ROUNDUP

'Probe' on divorce

IN A LANDMARK DECISION MADE BY THE SUPREME COURT TWO months ago, Soledad Fortier won a case over Alejandro Estrada, who had sued her for "disgraceful and immoral conduct" as a government employee.

Fortier had executed a Declaration of Pledging of Faithfulness to Luciano Quilapio Jr. in Arboviah's Witness' show in the 1990s while they were still legally married to other people. She said this was as good as a wedding and had the blessing of their God.

In the Aug. 30 episode of ABS-CBN's "Probe," Ricky Carandang finds out the implications of this court decision.

'Mr. 1000'

Bernie Mac is from Boss in the comedy "Mr. 1000," which airs Aug. 30, 9 p.m. on Star Movies.

Mac portrays a con artist who, smack in the middle of his middle-age retirement, gets a wake-up call that forces him to start over, with hilariously humbling, and ultimately unexpected results.

Given a new upper hand to do things right the second time around, will Mac be able to seize it?

Buddhism special

Discovery Channel takes a look at Buddhism in the 20th century with "The Boy With Divine Powers" and "Save Again Buddhism" in a two-hour special that premieres Sept. 5 at 9 p.m.

Fifteen-year-old Rinn Rinpoche has been identified as reigning as the 4 human tree in the throne for out at Tsurh Rumtpet, in Central Nepal since May 26, 2000, earning himself the name "Buddhist monk." He lives and studies up to be another six years until he gains enlightenment.

As one of thousands of pilgrims flock to the site, "The Boy With Divine Powers" will explore whether this is an extreme demonstration of power or whether the boy's claims are no more than an elaborate and commercially successful hoax.

"Save Buddhism" airs Sept. 4 at 7 a.m. and 3 p.m., Sept. 9 at 2 p.m., and Sept. 10 at 8 a.m.

AOL sells movies

NEW YORK... "Hitch," "24" and "Bally the Vampire Slayer" are among the movies and television shows that AOL will sell through its new video portal under deals it has forged with major Hollywood studios.

The special subscription service, expected in the fourth quarter, gives Hollywood studios a chance to test the demand for online video as it tries to offset revenues it expects to lose from a recent decision to drop subscription fees for many high-speed customers.

Older Sony hits such as "Charlie's Angels," "Stanley & Iris," and "RMBF" will be shown for free, but with ads.

AOL already has a partnership with Warner Bros., called "InTV," for free showings of classics like "Welcome Back Kotter," "Taxi" and "Growing Pains."

Ariel Anderson, AP

No regrets for Patrice: I'd do it all again

By Fran Katigbak

PATRICE PIRE

PATRICE PIRE, RESIDENT PUNK-ROCK ARtist on "Rock Star: Supernova," was eliminated from the competition last week after she was cast in the bottom three seemingly for the fourth time.

The reality TV show is a search for new group Supernova's front man. Three rock superstars—guitarist Tilly Clarke (Guns N' Roses), bassist Jason Newsted (Metallica) and drummer Tommy Lee (Mötley Crüe) —make up the band and selection panel.

Pire was a prodigy, second musician at 16. She has since become an award-winning singer-songwriter, co-producing numerous independent and major label records with her former bands. She has toured the United States and Western Europe.

Apart from being a multi-instrumentalist, Pire is into soap, martial arts, and homemaking as well.

In an exclusive phone interview with Inquirer Entertainment, she talked about those interests and how much she contributes to sound justice.

How young were you when you got interested in music?

I started playing the violin when I was 7, and continued for about four years. [Now] I also play the guitar and drums.

Who were your early musical influences?

I grew up listening to a lot of guitar oriented rock music like Led Zeppelin, Rolling Stones, Queen, Blue Oyster. I also listened to a lot of Motown, like Stevie Wonder.

You've been yoga, martial arts, traveling, and humanitarian work. How do you fit all those in your schedule?

My grueling about martial arts and yoga is you can do it anywhere.

Tell us about your humanitarian work.

I do a lot of work with activists for social justice, mostly music-related, like raising funds.

You said one of the things you learned on the show was to not take any moment for granted. Prior to that insight, how often did you catch yourself being lazy?

It's really not that I get lazy or uninspired. I just really love music that music's been my job for my whole life. But... it can sometimes get to you after

You've been working on a second for two years. Is that your first?

No, I've done many, many records. I was in a band called Static Sweet. We made eight records, some independent and some for major labels.

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

On 'Rock Star,' she says she learned the value of every moment and how to push herself to do better each time

So now, are you going solo or would you rather work with another band?

I've made one solo record; this is my second.

On the show, you've had conflicts with some of the rockers. How did you settle things, especially with Jill Gioia and Ryan Star?

Those arguments were very short misunderstandings and were resolved very quickly.

Ryan Navarro dished out tough criticism on your performances the past few weeks. What did you think of that?

At times it was confusing. One of the challenges of the contest was to figure out the criticisms by yourself in terms of details. It really pushed me to be more over-the-top and have more energy.

What was the best thing about being on "Rock Star: Supernova?"

I think my best experiences, because I love performing, was doing "Celebrity Skin" and my song "Beautiful Thing."

Do you regret being eliminated before getting the chance to rock with Supernova onstage?

I have no regrets. I'd do it all again.

"Rock Star: Supernova" airs on Star World every Wednesday, 8:30 a.m., and Thursday, 8 a.m., with replays every Wednesday and Thursday at 8 p.m.

'Grey's Anatomy' is Emmy favorite

Area page 81

KYRA Sedgwick a Best Actress nominee for "The Closer"

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ENTERTAINMENT

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FrancisM on 'Idol's' top 24: Now we'll really see

By Marinel R. Cruz

"NOW WE WILL REALLY see those who would step at nothing to get what they want, and those who are weak of heart. "

—Singer-TV host Francis Magalona

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

was discussing with Inquirer Entertainment his stepped-up job as a judge on ABC 5's "Philippine Idol" now that the 24 semifinalists have been picked.

The two other judges are Ariel "Dawn of Song" Ilhan Corales and music composer Ryan Cayabyab.

"We're all very excited," said Magalona, adding that, on the other hand,

THE GIRLS, from left: Paula Pamela Chavez, Yasmin Rose Medina, Riya Jel Pangan, Maureen Mauricio, Iris Patricia Mondejar, Arriane Lourdes Cruz, Erika Jill Bautista, Clarissa Ocfemia, Stephanie Lauren Bandioja, Abigail Blanco, Cherie Ann Cruz and Jellica Marie Mateo

THE BOYS: Gionolfo Magkaygil, Miguel Feliciano, Jan Kurt Nicos, Jasper Grey Cobus, Joseph Aaron Robert Bernardo, Raymond Sajor, Kenneth Dingle, Xiamer Dimpo, Freddie Calasel, Christian Pinugot, and Paul Andrew Muñoz

GOETHE-INSTITUT MANILA

The 3rd German Silent Film Festival

presents

The Golem

(How He Came into the World)

with music by Drip

on Tuesday, August 29, 2006, at Greenbelt 1 Cinema 2, 6:00 PM

Globe

"It's a bit mixed now."

He explained: "We're done with the [early elimination] rounds."

After five weeks of intense workouts and auditions, the judges finally announced the top 24 on Friday. For the next three weeks, the contenders will be divided into two groups—12 males and 12 females—each to perform a song of his or her choice.

Beginning Sept. 2, the two groups will alternately perform at SM Megamall Cinema 3, where a man-of-the-set "Philippine Idol" stage was built. The results for the beginning of official contests (the SMS voting) could be had 12 evenings.

When all the contestants have sung, "Idol" host Ryan Agoncillo will announce the start of voting, which ends the following day. Every week, the two who get the lowest number of votes will be eliminated. The performances will be aired live on ABC 5 at 8 p.m.

"I know that, as a judge I have the power to save voters," Magalona said. "But I won't abuse that power. I look at these kids as my own sons. They've come along way; they are the cream of the crop."

ARRIANE LOURDES CRUZ, 17, is the daughter of the late actor Mohammad Faisal. She has made it once over the Nasi Tungkatan" and the National Treasures Quest for the Best international field in Indonesia.

IRA PATRICIA MARAMBAN, 21, is the daughter of theater artist parents Glenda N. Manrique and Irma Adlawan. She won her first singing contest at 5.

ABIGAIL BLANCO, 24, started singing at age 6. By the time she was 12, Gail was singing professionally in her hometown in Cebu. In Manila, she did commercial jingles.

ERIKA JILL BAUTISTA, 24, is hearing-impaired. Her mother says that, at age 3, under the care of a nanny, Erika had an accident that damaged her eardrums.

JELLICA MARIE MATEO, 23, says the late composer George Canseco, a family friend, told her she would sing. Currently, she sings in hotel lounges and bars.

PAULA PAMELA "PAM" CHAVEZ, 22, says her story should inspire other young singers. She is, after all, a real survivor, having gone through a life-threatening ordeal when she was shot in the eye during a mugging incident.

RIYA JEL PANGAN, 20, became a finalist of the Metropop Song Festival in 1998. She bagged the grand prize in ABC 5's "Singapore Sa Pipo" in the same year.

CHRISTINA OTEYZA, 22, is a medical representative from a pharmaceutical company in Davao.

YASMIN ROSE MEDINA, 20, a former band member, took time off from singing last year to be a full-time mother.

MAUREEN MAURICIO, 26, has been a "regular" in singing lifts, but contests is in "Philippine Idol" does she's been most excited about.

STEPHANIE LAUREN BANDIOLA, 27, is an "Idol" old-timer, having joined and made it to the top 30 in the "Pinoy Idol" series.

CHERRY ANN CRUZ, 22, sang the landmark Carly "Spagetti Song" as her audition piece.

GIANCARLO MAGKAYGAL, 24, was part of Bumper Productions' "Pinakasexy," "Little Mermaid" and "Otso Otso Nina." He was also a member of the mass-debuter group 17/20.

JOSEPH AYOB, 17, is from Angeles City, Pampanga. Many deem he has a slight resemblance to heartthrob Piolo Pascual.

ROBERT BERNARDO, 26, says he joined "Idol" to break his family's "chain of poverty." His dreams is also to take drawing, sketching, painting and acting.

KENNETH "CALIX" DINGLE, 22, joined the fast-track screenings three times before the judges noticed him.

PAUL ANDREW MUÑOZ, 18, is an active volunteer at the Children's Garden of the Philippines and the Children Community Ministries—groups dedicated to saving the lives of street children.

FREDDIE CASAEL, 23, is in search of his African-American father who left him to live in the US.

XIAMER DIMPO, 27, was one of the winners in the 2000 Australian Talent Hunt in Canada. He has released an inspirational album here.

MIGUEL MENDOZA, 16, is the youngest, tallest and arguably the cutest of the top 24 finalists. He turned 16 when he joined the screenings on Sid Samaniego.

JAN KURT NICOS, 24, works for Unilever Philippines and expects full support from his colleagues there, especially if he makes it to Top 12.

CHRISTIAN MANSIA, 20, is a medical technologist at the Philippine General Hospital. He used to be a stage performer and relaxed member.

JASPER GREY COBUS, 23, is a philanthropy graduate who sang his way around Europe as one of the UP Singing Ambassadors.

JOSEPH GRIPO, 18, is a solo crooner at Saturday and a band member in Baguio City. One of his accomplishments was volleyball Best Scorer for three "Mythili days," a competition for assigned bands.

ENTERTAINMENT

BARCELONA "reunion," from left: Polmang, Lub Manzano, John Prats, Michelle Madrigal, Sue Gonzaga

She's not exactly torn between 2 heartthrobs

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

SOME GIRLS HAVE ALL THE luck.

In the last few weeks, Toni Gonzaga has had to shuttle between two cities, Manila and Barcelona, to work on two ABS-CBN projects.

No horror, your honor, not the last-on-the-run sort—Sam Milby for the movie "You are the One" and Luis Manzano for the drama-comedy TV series "Crazy for You."

As if this was not enough to make other girls turn green, Toni insists she has no time for boys, that she'd rather focus on her career and family.

Is she confusing those beautiful dudes?

"I'm not," she tells Inquirer Entertainment. "In fact, I'm so fully (thrilled) enjoying them."

Mentor for Sam

She singles out Sam's "innocence" as his

turn to F2

YOUR AFFORDABLE SOLUTION TO FALLING HAIR!

DID YOU KNOW...

TOKYO—Tokyo's subway has refused permission for an advertising poster featuring a nude and heavily pregnant Britney Spears, branding it "too intimidating" for young people. Spears' picture—nude but covering her breasts with her arms and crossing her legs at the knee—appeared in the August issue of Harper's Bazaar and will be on the cover of the magazine's Japanese edition in October. The publishers had hoped to display the cover photo for a week at a subway station in central Tokyo, but ran into resistance. Harper's Bazaar could not be reached for comment. Reuters

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9 MIAMI VICE

10 SUKOB

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2 MY SUPER EX-GIRLFRIEND

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2 MIAMI VICE

3 MY SUPER EX-GIRLFRIEND

4 LITTLE MAN

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2 SUKOB

3 AMERICAN DREAMZ

4 OH MY GHOST!

5 LITTLE MAN

6 THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT 2

BACOLOD

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3 STORMBREAKER

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'Survivor

NEW YORK—A GROUP OF

city officials blasted CBS an

"Survivor" after the senator

that the reality show was

also drew call his divided by

Saying that the setup will

awesome, the officials called

outside Section.

"The idea of having a bun

is preposterous," City Cou

Liu said Thursday. "I bet you

to desperate for ratings!"

TOPS and

She's not exactly torn between . . .

Pal for Luis

No pressure

' draws flak—and buzz—for 'racist' season

NEW YORK — In his author's amended statement of the re- sion, promoters divi- ish CBS is re- le of the casts- ardsman- ichin all anybody be

the first premiere of the 13th season of "Survivor," which premieres Sept. 16, the contestants competing for the $1 million prize while stranded on the Cook Islands in the South Pacific will be divided into four teams — Blacks, Asians, Latinos and whites.

Liu, who is Asian-American, said he was launching a campaign urging CBS to pull the show because it would encourage racial division and promote negative typecasts. He and a coalition of officials, including the council's black, Latino and Asian caucus, planned to rally at City Hall on Friday.

In a statement, CBS Entertainment, which is part of New York-based CBS Corp., defended the ethnic twist, saying it follows the show's tradition of introducing new creative elements and casting newcomers that reflect cultural and social issues.

Major publicity

And all that has caused a major publicity nuisance for the network's summer series before the season's first episode airs.

"I think at first glance when you just hear the idea, it could sound like a stunt," the show's host, Jeff Probst, said on a CBS morning news show. "But that's not what we're doing here. We've always had a low number of minority applicants ...

... so we set out and said, 'Let's turn this cyclone into cream for the show.'" Besides, he added, it fit the show's mission of being a "social experiment." AP-Reuters

Hollywood may start rethinking star system

LOS ANGELES—AFTER ONE OF HOLLYWOOD's most powerful stars publicly scolded actor Tom Cruise, the film capital began to think-not-conscious studios may finally be fed up with giving stars the run of movieland.

But some industry insiders believe Viacom Inc. chair Sumner Redstone's rebuke of Cruise was never a sign that a great money-making career was on the wane.

In few other places on Earth are stars pampered the way they are in Hollywood. Jewelers loan them diamonds, designers give them dresses, and studios cater to their every whim.

Few actors besides Cruise have been held to such high regard in Hollywood. But his last film, "Mission: Impossible III," while raking in close to $400 million worldwide, did not do as well as expected.

Redstone said a key reason Viacom's film studio, Paramount Pictures, did not renew its deal with the actor was his off-screen behavior. Redstone told the Wall Street Journal: "He's a media actor. But we don't think someone who at his stage could publicly ridicule and insult the company deserves to on the lot."

To some, Redstone's comments signaled a major change.

Less intimidated

"There is a palpable change in climate," one source at a major talent agency said. "Stars' demands have gotten so over the top, and the studios, because they're part of publicly traded companies, have to maintain quarterly results, I do think they are less intimidated by the stars [now]."

Producers Jerry Bruckheimer, whose credits include the Disney blockbuster "Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest," agreed that the demand for talent had become a buyer's market.

"The studios are certainly being much more conscious of the business, tightening the reins," he said.

Bruckheimer, the biggest stars, like Cruise and Tom Hanks, remain in demand, Bruckheimer said.

"If you want Bruce for a picture, you either pay his price, or you go to somebody else," he said, adding that mid-level performers are the ones who get squeezed. Arthur Spiegelman, Reuters

MTRCB RATING: PG-13

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